BENGAL
DISTRICT
GAZETTEERS

# BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.



# PABNA

BY

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# GAZETTEER

## OF THE

# PABNA DISTRICT.

## CHAPTER I.

### PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

THE district of Pābna, which occupies the south-east corner of the Rājshāhi Division, is situated between 23° 49′ and 24° 45′ north latitude and 89° 1′ and 89° 53′ east longitude. It comprises an area of 1,678 square miles and, according to the census of 1921, contains a population of 1,389,494 persons. The administrative headquarters, and, if estimated by its population, the second town of the district, is Pābna, situated on the Ichhāmati river. The chief town of the district, as regards both population and commercial importance, is Sirājganj, the headquarters of the subdivision of the same name, which is situated on the western bank of the river Jamuna. GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

The origin of the name Pābna is doubtful. General Cunningham conjectured that it might be derived from the name of the ancient kingdom of Pundra or Paundravardhana, which was in existence in the third century B.C. and was still flourishing in the seventh century A.D., when Hiuen Tsiang travelled in India. "In the spoken dialects," he wrote, "the name would be shortened from Pon-bardhan to Podabhan, from which it is an easy step to Pubna or Pobna, as some of the people now pronounce it."* Origin of name.

Pābna is bounded on the north by the district of Bogra, on the east by the river Brahmaputra or Jamuna, which separates it from the districts of Mymensingh and Dacca, on the south by the river Padma or Ganges, which separates it from the districts of Farīdpur and Nadia, and on the west and north-west by the district of Rājshāhi. Boundarie

* A. Cunningham, Ancient Geography of India (1871), p. 480.

Configuration. In shape, the district resembles an irregular triangle, lying at the head of the Bengal delta within the angle formed by the confluence of the Ganges and Brahmaputra. It is a wide alluvial plain, but not altogether uniform in character. The south-western portion, which constitutes the Sadar or head-quarters subdivision, is higher in level, except for a portion of the Mathura thāna bordering the river Jamuna on the east. It resembles the northern districts of the Presidency Division and is an area of silted-up river beds, obstructed drainage and marshy depressions. The Sirājganj subdivision, on the other hand, more closely resembles the districts of Eastern Bengal; it is low-lying, and the drainage, except in Rāiganj, is not impeded by the high banks of dead rivers. It receives the benefit of an annual deposit of silt from the Jamuna, and at the same time, when the floods subside, the water readily flows off and does not stagnate as it does further west. On this account also it is healthier than the south-western half of the district. Large open spaces of rice and jute land, each almost encircled by a belt of villages half hidden among trees and bamboo clumps, cover a great portion of the cultivated surface of the country. Apart from the two great bordering rivers, the district is intersected by water-channels of varying magnitude, and during the rainy season, owing to the rise of the rivers and the spill water spreading over the country, most villages are accessible by boats and many by boats alone.

Scenery. The succession of well-cultivated tracts of open country, with occasional clumps or lines of trees and with villages imbedded in foliage, is not devoid of a certain quiet beauty. The scenery along the Padma and Brahmaputra has a special character of its own. Some, struck by the contrast with the arid plains of other parts of India, write enthusiastically about the charms of the river scenery in this part of the country. "Travelling up its mighty streams, one is voyaging in the midst of an entirely new India, and India almost beyond the imagination. The huge rivers, in places two miles wide, even in the dry season, have nothing in common with the bare brown plains of the Deccan, the placid luxuriance of Madras or the burning deserts of Rajputana. They have a charm that never fades. In the faint opalescence of early dawn, when the great square-sailed country craft drift past in dim and ghostly silence, they recall memories of unforgettable hours upon the Nile. The vessel seems to be steaming through the morning mists on some illimitable lake. Even in the full glare of noontide the abiding beauty of the scene remains

undiminished. The steamer traverses a flat green land and swings past village after village screened by dense foliage. At every halting place the crowd of passengers on the banks reveals a cluster of fresh colours. The shallow side creeks are full of quaint craft. The little shore boats, dancing swiftly across the glittering waters, are like sampans; the vessels floating slowly down the broad bosom of the stream are like a fleet of junks. Immense unwieldy flats, laden with jute, glide slowly by. In winter there is a keen, fresh, wholesome breeze; and even to those who think they know India the journey is so picturesque and unfamiliar that it is like a voyage into the unknown."*

Others, however, so far from being attracted by these great waterways, consider the river scenery tame and monotonous. Such, for instance, was the impression of Sir Joseph Hooker when he travelled along the Ganges and passing Pābna made his way up the Jamuna:—"Nothing can be more dreary and uninteresting than the scenery of this part of the delta. The water is clay-coloured and turbid. The banks are of stratified sand and mud hardly raised above the mean level of the country, and consequently unlike those bordering most annually flooded rivers; for here the material is so unstable, that the current yearly changes its course. A wiry grass sometimes feebly binds the loose soil, on which there are neither houses nor cultivation."†

*Bils.*

One of the most striking features in the configuration of the country is an abundance of low-lying depressions, which the accumulation of water converts into marshes or swamps (*bils*). Many dry up in the hot weather, but during the rains expand into broad but shallow sheets of water, which may be described as fresh water lagoons. Their appearance, however, varies greatly, for while some are clear and deep sheets of water, others are shallow swamps filled with grass and reeds growing so thickly as to be almost intermatted. In some the surface of the shallow water is covered with lotus and other water plants, the flowering of which in the hot weather is a pleasant sight. Others again, so far from being unproductive wastes, are uniformly fertile rice lands, in which a long-stemmed rice grows and thrives. At the time of harvest they present an extraordinary appearance, for the rice grows, matures, and very often is harvested in water. In the

* Lovat Fraser, *India under Curzon and After* (1911), pp. 368-9.

† Himalayan Journals (Minerva Library, 1893), p. 472.

deeper *bils* nothing is to be seen but water, often however dotted with islands or enclosed by high land on which are villages and tree growth. Many of the villages are completely isolated during the rains, when the only means of reaching them is by boat. At this time of the year it is a curious sight to see boats, large and small, making their way across country through lanes in the green fields of tall rice that cover the water surface. It will readily be understood that these *bils* form a serious obstacle to transport by land, for roads can only be constructed across them at great expense. They have to run on high embankments, and these again have to be strong enough to withstand the pressure of water, which may be as much as ten feet in depth.

It is probable that the formation of these *bils* is not due to one and the same cause. In some cases a string of them is found along a line of drainage, which suggests that they represent the remains of some great river, which centuries ago deserted its channel and sought its course elsewhere. In other cases they are due to the action of the rivers, which by centuries of silt deposit have raised their beds and marginal banks so high that they flow above the level of the surrounding country. The country between a pair of parallel rivers thus forms a kind of trough, the drainage of which cannot be discharged into the rivers. The rivers again which would have filled them by the overflow of silt-laden waters cannot do so because they are locked within their channels by high silt-formed banks.

The largest of these *bils* is the Chalan Bil, which covers an extensive area in the Rāiganj and Chātmohar thānas. Other extensive *bils* are the Gājna Bil (48 square miles in area) south of Dulai, the Bara Bil (12 square miles) to the south of the village of Farīdpur and north of Ekdanta, Ataikola and Gosainbāri, the Sonāpātila Bil (14 square miles) north of Pābna and the Ghugudah Bil (4 square miles). There are also a number of large *bils* in the Chātmohar thāna, *e.g.*, Kuralia Bil (18 square miles), Chiral Bil (8 square miles) and Dikshi Bil (15 square miles). Another *bil* which should be mentioned is Gurka Bil (8 square miles) lying partly in the Pābna and partly in the Sāinthia police-stations.

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Chalan Bil is the name applied to a low-lying marshy tract extending over about 140 square miles on the borders of the Rājshāhi and Pābna districts. It lies between Singra, a police station in the Nātor subdivision of Rājshāhi, on the north-west

and Astamanisha in the Pābna district on the south-east, close to Nunnagar, where the rivers Gumāni and Baral meet. The portion lying in this district is about 22 miles long and 4 miles wide.

The principal feeder of the Chalan Bil is the river Atrai, which conveys into it water which it brings down during its passage through the districts of Dinājpur and Rājshāhi. Its chief outlet is the Baral, by which its water is carried off and eventually finds its way into the Brahmaputra. The *bil* is a depressed basin, sunk on all sides below the level of the adjacent country except at the south-eastern extremity where its water escapes into the Baral through the Gumāni. When the Brahmaputra is in flood, the current of the Baral is held back, and the water of the *bil* remains pent up until the Brahmaputra falls again. During the dry season the greater portion of the *bil* dries up, leaving a water basin of about 15 square miles.

The *bil* is said to have extended formerly over as much as 421 square miles, but owing to the incursion of silt-laden water brought in from the Ganges by the Baral and other rivers in Rājshāhi, nearly the whole of this large area has now become dry land resembling very closely in appearance the fen country in Cambridgeshire. In 1909, a temporary subdivision of the Public Works Department (called the Chalan Bil subdivision) was created for the investigation of the question of its drainage. An enquiry was held extending from the middle of February to the end of September, and it was found that its area has been reduced to 142 square miles, the remainder having been reclaimed. Even in this reduced area, only 33 square miles were under water all the year round. The rest was under water for part of the year, but was rising in level every year with the deposition of silt; 49 square miles were low land, which could only be cultivated during Febuary, March and April, while 22 square miles were raised land, which was cultivable for dry crops from January or February, and 38 square miles were cultivable from November. It was then calculated that 222½ million cubic feet of silt a year were brought in by the feeder rivers, while 53 million cubic feet were carried off by the rivers draining the *bil*. The balance of 169½ million cubic feet was deposited annually: this deposit, if distributed equally over the whole 142 square miles, means a raising of the level at the rate of half an inch a year.

In May 1910 a further enquiry was held in order to ascertain the condition of the *bil* during the dry weather. It was found that the area of the *bil* proper had been further reduced. The portion lying in this district was dry and under cultivation, while the depth of water in the Rājshāhi portion was only 1 foot. In 1913 a further inspection was made, with the result that it was ascertained that only 12 to 15 square miles remained under water throughout the year (compared with 33 square miles in 1909), the banks all round being high and under cultivation, while the depth of water in the month of April varied from 9 inches to 18 inches. It is thus apparent that the Chalan Bil is silting up rapidly. Land is being reclaimed, new villages are springing up along its sides, and the watery waste is yielding place to settled tilth.

The neighbourhood appears to have been formerly populous and prosperous to judge from the temples, tanks and buildings which are left. Hāndiāl was an emporium of sufficient importance to be the seat of a commercial residency of the East India Company. Samāj, where there are numerous old tanks, is said to have contained a cutcherry of the Moghuls, and Marich-purān to have been garrisoned by a troop of soldiers; there were many Hindu shrines at Astamanisha, and Kola Guākhara and Sarara were the homes of pandits with flourishing *tôls*. The country however declined and the population dwindled owing to fluvial changes, which affected both the health and the commerce of the neighbourhood a century or more ago, and much has been reclaimed and repeopled within living memory.

RIVER SYSTEM.

The river system is constituted by the Padma and Brahmaputra with their interlacing offshoots and tributaries. The whole district is covered by a network of minor watercourses, which render most parts of it accessible by water during the rainy season. In addition to these flowing streams, the interior is seamed by the deserted beds of old rivers, most of which are dry except in the rains.

The drainage of the Sirājganj subdivision sets generally from north-west to south-east, the rivers entering it from the north-west and flowing into the Jamuna after a tortuous course. In the Sadar subdivision, however, the general slope of the country is from west to east, and the main rivers fall into the Hurāsāgar, itself an offshoot of the Jamuna.

Alluvion and diluvion.

Alluvion and diluvion are constantly taking place along the courses of the principal rivers of the district, especially the

Padma and the Jamuna, the river channels perpetually swinging from side to side of their sandy beds, while the streams themselves sometimes completely change their courses. In consequence of the windings in the course of those rivers in which there is a considerable current, the current sets much stronger against one bank than the other. The bank against which it sets, which is called the "cutting bank," is generally perpendicular, while the bank immediately opposite is a gently sloping bank, along which silt is deposited and land reformed. For a series of years one bank is gradually cut away and the other added to, and then for another series of years the opposite process goes on. Islands, some of considerable size, rise from the river beds, sometimes to disappear as quickly as they sprung up. The surface of the country in the neighbourhood of the great rivers is thus subjected to constant changes, which naturally give rise to innumerable disputes over land. Alluvion and diluvion are, in fact, the causes of a large portion of the criminal and civil litigation in the district.

Some remarkable instances of fluvial changes have occurred in the last half century. Between 1881 and 1891, the Ganges continually trended north, eroding the land from about 10 miles west of Pābna to about 6 miles east of it. Owing to its encroachments the off-take of the Ichhāmati, which used to issue from the Padma at Dogāchi, 7 miles south-east of Pābna, was changed to Bājitpur, 2 miles south-west of the town. The change of course directed the full force of the current against the bank where the district offices stand. Lower down the Padma carried away altogether the south-east corner of the district, washing away villages in Mathura, estimated to contain nearly 8,000 persons. The Atrai river, which used to bend to the east and fall into the Jamuna, consequently fell direct into the Padma, the latter having cut away all the land through which the eastward bend of the river Atrai used to pass. The effects of the change in the course of the Ganges did not stop here. Having cut away its northern bank, it spread over the country, leaving in many places such a deposit of sand as ruined the fertility of the land, and during 1890 and 1891 caused distress in the south of Pābna, Dulai and Mathura thanās, which necessitated relief works. Another striking result of its oscillations was the cutting away and transference of the site of old Goalundo from the southern or Farīdpur bank to the northern or Pābna bank.

The process of erosion continued during the next decade (1891—1900). The Padma caused some further diluvion in Dulai, while a considerable portion of Mathura was cut away by the river Jamuna and thrown up on its opposite bank in the Dacca and Mymensingh districts. Further north the Jamuna made amends for these ravages, and in the Shāhzādpur and Sirājganj thanās extensive *chars* were formed, which became sufficiently high to admit of cultivation and permanent habitation.

The changes in the course of the Padma near Pābna town have been extensive. Formerly it flowed close to the town of Pābna, while in 1876 it was about 4 miles distant. It again turned and gradually approached, until about 1908 it was within 1 mile of the town. After that it turned again and gradually receded from the town. Its subsequent movements are sketched in the article on Pābna town in the last chapter. At Sirājganj, on the other hand, the Jamuna seems to have steadily encroached to the west. In 1848 the whole town of Sirājganj had to be removed to a new site on the west owing to a change in the course of the river. The original site of the subdivisional Courts there is now well to the east of the main channel of the Jamuna. It is true that for a short time after that the river moved to the east, but during the present century the main trend has been to the west, and the river has been cutting nearer to the town.

*Chars* or *diāras.*

On the *chars* or *diāras* the homesteads are grouped close together in long rows along the high banks of dead or dying channels of the river. Unlike the inland villages there is a great scarcity of trees and vegetation, as well as of thatching grass, but plantains grow well and are prized for the protection they afford against storms. Owing to the shifting of the rivers, the people are frequently compelled to move their houses, but the danger and inconvenience of such a life are compensated for by bumper crops, especially in the Jamuna where the soil is quickly fertilized by silt. It does not take long for a newly-formed *char* to become capable of bearing excellent crops, and the competition for land is keen. On the other hand, good land is often spoilt by deposits of sand, so that cultivation is speculative, but the cultivators are amply repaid if they get one crop in three or four years. A handsome profit is made from jute; and even the lands which are uncultivable are a source of income on account of the *jhāo* or tamarisk jungle, which is sold for fuel, and of grass, which is in great demand for feeding cattle during the rainy season.

Padma.

The Padma forms a portion of the western and the whole of the southern boundary of the district for a distance of about 90 miles. The name Padma is given to the main stream of the Ganges in the lower part of its course between the off-take of the Bhāgirathi in Murshidābād district and the south-eastern corner of Dacca district, where it joins the Meghna. Until some 400 years ago the course of the Ganges, after entering Bengal proper, was by the channel of the Bhāgirathi and Hooghly, but by degrees this channel silted up and became unequal to its task, and the main stream of the Ganges was thus obliged to seek another outlet. In this way the Ichhāmati, the Jalangi, the Māthābhānga and the Garai became in turn the main stream. The river tended ever to the east; and at last, aided perhaps by a subsidence of the unstable surface of the country, it broke eastward right across the old drainage channels, until it was met and stopped by the Brahmaputra. The present course of the Padma past Pābna district is, therefore, of comparatively recent origin. The river Ichhāmati above referred to is south of the Padma, and it may be an older river which was cut in halves by the Padma, as there is a stream of the same name to the north of the Padma in this district. It is further noticeable that in Dhrubananda Misrà's *Kayastha Karika*, which purports to contain Ballāla Sen's rules for the Kayasths, the country of the Bangaja Kayasth is said to be bounded on the east by the (old) Brahmaputra, on the west by the Madhumati and on the north by the Ichhāmati.

Reference should also be made to a conjecture regarding a former channel of the Padma made by the great geographer Rennell in his *Account of the Ganges and Burrampooter Rivers* (Philosophical Transactions, 1781). "Appearances favour very strongly the opinion that the Ganges had its former bed in the tract now occupied by the lakes and morasses between Nattore and Jaffiergunge, striking out of the present course at Bauleah and passing by Pootya. With an equal degree of probablity we may trace its supposed course by Dacca to a junction with the Burrampooter or Megna near Fringybazar, when the accumulation of two such mighty streams probably scooped out the present amazing bed of the Megna." The places mentioned by Rennell proceeding from west to east are Rāmpur-Boālia, the headquarters of the Rājshāhi district, Puthia between it and Nātor in the same district and Jāfarganj in the Dacca district. The place

last named is shown in a map of the Mymensingh district dated 1861 as a thāna headquarters about 6 miles south-east of Mathura potice-station. It is now known as Payla Jāfarganj and is close to the steamer station of Elachipur opposite Goalundo. According to Rennell's theory therefore the probable former course of the Ganges would correspond with that of the present channel of the Baral.

In this portion of its course the Ganges is not a sacred river. Religious feeling being conservative, sanctity attaches only to its old channel and not to the comparatively modern course of the Padma. While therefore the Hindus revere the Bhāgirathi, which used to be its main channel, the water of the Padma is no more sacred than that of the Hooghly south of Calcutta, which is another modern outlet. Though not a sacred river, the Padma has all the attributes of grandeur and utility which characterize the upper channel. In the words of Sir William Hunter, "it rolls majestically down to the sea in a bountiful stream, which never becomes a merely destructive torrent in the rains and never dwindles away in the hottest summer."

Its bed is wide, and the river is split up into several channels flowing between constantly shifting sand banks and islands. During the rains the current is very strong, and even steamers may find difficulty in making headway against it. It is navigable at all seasons of the year by river steamers and native boats of all sizes and may rank as one of the most frequented waterways in the world. The downward traffic is most brisk in the rainy season, when the river comes down in flood. During the rest of the year the boats make their way back up stream, often without cargoes, either helped by a favourable wind or laboriously towed along the bank. It is spanned near Pāksi by the great Hardinge bridge [named after the Viceroy (Lord Hardinge) in whose time it was built], which carries the main line of the Eastern Bengal Railway.

Ichhāmati.

Immediately below Bājitpur Ghāt, the river Ichhāmati issues from the Padma, and after passing the town of Pābna flows through the southern part of the district by a very tortuous course and joins the Hurāsāgar just above the large village of Bera. The length of its course from Bājitpur to Bera is 52 miles or double that by road. For eight months of the year this river is little more than a dry sandy bed. It must not be confused with the river of the same name in Sirājganj subdivision.

The Baral issues from the Padma at Chārghāt in Rājshāhi district and receives the water of the Atrai through the channel called the Gumāni shortly after it debouches in this district. It flows through the northern part of the Sadar subdivision, passing the large village of Chātmohar, the headquarters of the thāna of the same name, and continuing its course to the south-east joins the Hurāsāgar south of Shāhzādpur near the spot where that river is joined by the Ichhāmati of the Sirājganj subdivision. In the latter part of its course it forms the boundary between the Sadar and Sirājganj subdivisions. Its length in the district is 35 miles. Baral.

The Atrai, which is identifiable with the Atri, one of the sacred rivers of the *Mahābhārata*, was formerly one of the great rivers of North Bengal, for it was the main channel by which the waters of the Tīsta discharged into the Ganges. In 1787, however, the Tīsta broke away from its ancient bed and cut for itself a new and capacious channel by which it found its way into the Brahmaputra. Since then the Atrai has lost its importance and has now few traces of its former greatness. It enters the district from Rājshāhi, flowing through the Chalan Bil and falls into the Baral near Nunnagar. Formerly it used to pursue a course to the south and east after leaving the Chalan Bil till it fell into the Jamuna; but the middle portion of this old channel has been obliterated by the Baral and Ichhāmati, which taking off from the Padma cut across the Atrai and overwhelmed it by a copious deposit of silt. The southern portion of the Atrai in this district can still be traced from its junction with the Ichhāmati at Boālmāri; it then flows through Dulai and Mathura thānas and falls into the Padma near Ratanganj. This river affords one of the most striking instances of riverain changes in the district. Atrai.

The Chiknai, which rises in the *bils* west of Chātmohar, receives an access of flood water from the Padma during the rains and falls into the Baral near Farīdpur outpost. It is navigable in the rainy season, and in the dry season it forms a fishery supplying Pābna and other places with fish. Chiknai.

The name Jamuna is given to the lower section of the Brahmaputra from its entrance into the plains of Bengal to its confluence with the Padma. It forms the eastern boundary of the district for a length of 80 miles, separating Pābna from the districts of Mymensingh and Dacca. The present channel of the Jamuna is of comparatively recent formation. When Rennell compiled his map of Bengal Brahmaputra or Jamuna.

towards the close of the eighteenth century, the main stream of the Brahmaputra bent sharply round the end of the range of the Gāro Hills and flowed in a south-easterly direction across the district of Mymensingh to join the Meghna just below Bhairab Bazar. At that time the Tīsta river, instead of joining the Brahmaputra in Rangpur district as it now does, flowed south along what is practically the present channel of the Jamuna, through the country now comprising the districts of Rangpur, Bogra and Pābna, and fell into the Ganges somewhere about the present site of the junction of that river and the Jamuna. About the beginning of the nineteenth century the Brahmaputra having raised its bed and lost its velocity was no longer able to hold its own against the Meghna. So it left its old channel and broke to the west, catching the waters of the Tīsta on the way, and cut out a new channel for itself, which is practically its present channel.

Even in the beginning of the mineteenth century, the original channel through the Mymensingh district had become of secondary importance; and to the present time, though it still bears the name of Brahmaputra, it has dwindled to a mere watercourse navigable only during the rainy season. In 1850 Sir Joseph Hooker, while travelling to Dacca, described this great change as follows:—"A few miles beyond Pubna we passed from a narrow canal at once into the main stream of the Burrampooter at Jafferganj; our maps had led us to expect that it flowed fully seventy miles to the eastward in this latitude; and we were surprised to hear that within the last twenty years the main body of that river had shifted its course thus far to the westward. This alteration was not effected by the gradual working westward of the main stream, but by the old eastern channel so rapidly silting up as to be now unnavigable, while the Jummul,* which receives the Teesta and which is laterally connected by branches with the Burrampooter, became consequently wider and deeper, and eventually the principal stream."

This portion of the course of the Brahmaputra may be described as a network of interlacing channels, many of which dry up in the cold season but are filled to overflowing during the rains. The main channel forms the boundary between Pābna on one side and Mymensingh and Dacca on the other; but this, though the only line of demarcation that is feasible,

* The river referred to is the Jamuna.

is a somewhat unsatisfactory boundary, as the main stream will flow in one year on one side of the expanse over which it spreads its waters, and in the next year on the other, so that the islands in its course fall sometimes in one district, sometimes in another. Even in the dry season it has a breadth of from three to four miles, and it is perpetually throwing up islands in its bed and washing them away again. New sand banks are deposited during one rainy season and swept away by the floods of the following year. It cuts away and adds accretions to its banks with equal impartiality, and these continual changes are a source of much litigation and occasional violence.

The Jamuna is a very important waterway. Its broad surface is covered with country craft of all sizes and rigs, down to dug-out canoes and timber-rafts, and it is navigable, at all seasons of the year, by large cargo steamers with attendant flats and by the speedier passenger steamers that ply from Goalundo to Dibrugarh in Assam. The principal place on its bank in this district is Sirājganj, an important jute emporium.

Kāzipur and Ichhāmati.

At the extreme northerly point of the district the Jamuna throws off a small offshoot, called the Kāzipur river, which flows south through the Kāzipur police-station (Sirājganj subdivision) and joins the Ichhāmati (not to be confused with the river of the same name in the Sadar subdivision), which enters Pābna from the Dhūnat thāna of Bogra district. This Ichhāmati is mentioned in Montogomery Martin's *Eastern India* in the description of Dinājpur, and, as shown in the maps of Rennell, it would appear at one time to have been connected with the Karatoya. The united streams flow south by a winding course through Sirājganj thāna, until they fall into the larger river, the Karatoya or Phuljhur, at Nalka, a fairly important commercial centre, being situated at the junction of the two main inland waterways of the subdivision.

Karatoya or Phuljhur.

The Karatoya has an interesting history. It rises in the Baikunthapur jungle in the extreme north-west of Jalpaiguri district, forms for some distance the boundary between Dinājpur and Rangpur districts, and then meanders through Rangpur and Bogra. In the south of Bogra district it receives the Halhālia, and the united stream is then known as the Phuljhur. It leaves Bogra at Chandaikona and flowing in a southerly direction past Rāiganj and Sujāpur is, as already mentioned, joined by the Ichhāmati at Nalka. The Phuljhur

then flows south past the important village of Ullāpāra, a few miles below which it joins the Hurāsāgar at Narnia after a course in this district of about 40 miles. After this junction it takes the name of Hurāsāgar and passing close by Shāhzādpur and Bera joins the Jamuna near Nakalia.

The Karatoya is an ancient river mentioned in the Purānas and had a high repute for sanctity. It was the eastern boundary of the old kingdom of Paundravardhana, the country of Pundras, which it separated from Kāmarupa. It is shown in Van Den Brouck's map of Bengal (*circa* 1660) as flowing into the Ganges, and in fact, before the destructive floods of 1787, it brought down to the Atrai and so to the Ganges the great volume of Tīsta water. Since the main stream of the Tīsta broke away to the east in 1787, the Karatoya and the Phuljhur have gradually silted up, and they are at the present day rivers of minor importance. One channel, which joins the Baral 30 miles east of Pābna, is still called indifferently the Burhi Tīsta or Old Tista and the Karto or Karatoya. Traces of an old channel, for which the name of the Karatoya is claimed, are alse pointed out in the Chātmohar thāna, where it appears to have been obliterated by the Baral. Astamanisha is said to have stood on its bank and there were many Sanskrit *tôls* along its course.

Hurāsāgar. The Hurāsāgar is an offshoot of the Jamuna, and flows south-south-west through Shāhzādpur thāna to Narnia, where, as above mentioned, it is joined by the Phuljhur. The united stream then flows more to the south, passing the large village of Shāhzādpur, till it is joined by the Baral. It then turns to the south-east, passes the jute mart of Bera, where it receives the Ichhāmati of the Sadar subdivision, and joins the Jamuna again. Its length in the district is 33 miles.

Simla Khāl. The Simla Khāl debouches from the Jamuna and flowing east of Sirājganj town falls into the Dhānbāndi river near Baditara, 4½ miles south of Sirājganj.

Dhānbāndi. The Dhānbāndi is an offshoot from the Jamuna, which it leaves near Sanchalia, 6 miles north of Sirājganj; passing through that town it falls into the Hurāsāgar river near Maupur. A bridge with a span of 120 feet was built over the river at Sirājganj in 1892; it is called the Elliott bridge after Sir Charles Elliott, then Lientenant-Governor of Bengal, by whom the foundation stone was laid. The portion of the river between Sanchalia and Sirājganj has almost silted up, and, in

places, no trace of the old bed can be found. At present, it does not get flood water from its original source near Sanchalia as early as from the Simla Khāl through the Kāta Khāl. The Kāta Khāl was a channel cut by an indigo planter of Sirājganj for the convenience of boat traffic during the rains. Both the Simla Khāl and Dhānbāndi river were navigable rivers during all seasons of the year about 30 years ago, but at present they are navigable only during the rainy season.

The district is covered by recent alluvium, consisting of sandy clay and sand along the course of the rivers, and fine silt consolidating into clay in the flatter parts of the river plain. GEOLOGY

Where the ground is not occupied by the usual crops of North Bengal, it is covered with an abundant natural vegetation. Deserted river-beds, ponds and marshes and streams with a sluggish current have a copious vegetation of *Vallisneria* and similar plants. Land subject to inundation has usually a covering of *Tamarix* and reedy grasses; and in some parts, where the ground is more or less marshy, *Rosa involucrata* is plentiful. This rose calls for special mention. Its frequent occurrence in the neighbouring district of Dacca struck Sir Joseph Hooker, who wrote in his *Himalayan Journals* :—"The native vegetation is very similar to that of Hooghly, except that the white rose is frequent here. The fact of a plant of this genus being as common on the plains of Bengal as a dog-rose is in England, and associated with cocoanuts, palms, mangos, plantains and banyans, has never yet attracted the attention of botanists, though the species was described by Roxburgh. As a geographical fact, it is of great importance, for the rose is usually considered a northern genus, and no kind but this inhabits a damp hot tropical climate. Even in mountainous countries situated near the equator, as in the Himalayas and Andes, wild roses are very rare, and only found at great elevations, whilst they are unknown in the southern hemisphere. It is curious that this rose, which is also a native of Burma and the Indian Peninsula, does not in this latitude grow west of the meridian of 87°; it is confined to the upper Gangetic delta, and inhabits a climate in which it would least of all be looked for." BOTANY

The country is on the whole well wooded with bamboo clumps and banyan, *pipal*, *bābul* (Acacia arabica), red cotton (Bombax malabaricum), jack, *bel*, tamarind, cocoanut and date

palm trees. The villages are generally imbedded in thickets and shrubberies of semi-spontaneous and more or less useful trees, while waste lands are, for the most part, covered with grasses such as *Imperata arundinacea* and *Andropogon aciculatus*. There are no forests, but there are extensive patches of jungle in the north and north-west of the district.

The chief timber trees are the mango, jack, *jāmun* (Eugenia Jambolana), cotton tree, *mahānim* or *panya* (Melia azadirachta) and *pitlarāj* (Amoora sobituxa): their wood is used for making doors, windows and furniture. The wood of the *bābul* is also largely used for cart wheels. Bamboos are abundant and furnish the most common material for house-building. The *ulu* grass (Saccharum cylindricum) is employed for thatching, *pātıpāta* (Clinogyne dochotoma) is regularly cultivated in the neighbourhood of Sirājganj for the manufacture of mats, while cane (Calamus rotang), which bounds in swampy areas, is used for making baskets.

In the Statistical Account of Bengal published in 1877 it was stated :—

FAUNA. Wild ainmals.

"The large game of the district consists of buffaloes and deer, both of which are rare, and of tigers, leopards, and wild pigs, all of which are plentiful. The wild pigs in Pābna are both numerous and of large size, and pig-sticking has long been a favourite sport of the European residents and visitors." This account no longer applies to the district. Wild buffaloes, deer and tigers have disappeared with the advance of cultivation ; it is said that a man-eating tiger was killed at the close of the last century after he had killed several persons and caused a panic near the town of Pābna. Leopards and wild pig however are still plentiful. Though the number of lecpards has been reduced, they are still found in police-stations Chātmohar, Dulai and Ullāpāra, where there are many patches of jungle. Their depredations are not altogether confined to cattle, for every year a few deaths of human beings are reported. Wild pigs swarm in some parts and are a curse to cultivators, whose crops they ravage. They are most frequent in the river *chars ;* inland they abound wherever they can find cover near rice and sugarcane fields. A few wolves are said to have been seen in the jungle to the north and north-west of the district. Other common mammals are that ubiquitous scavenger the jackal, the mongoose, the ruddy mongoose, the jungle cat, civet cat and toddy cat, the porcupine, fox, hare and two varieties of otter.

Game birds.

As is only natural in a district which is bounded by two of the greatest rivers in India, which is intersected by numerous minor rivers and creeks and which contains many swamps, there is an abundance of aquatic birds. During the cold weather the grey lag goose, bar-headed goose and black-backed goose or comb-duck visit the district, but they are wary and difficult to shoot. Several varieties of ducks can also be distinguished, *e.g.*, the pintail, sheldrake, shoveller, gadwall, pochard, mallard, spotted billed duck, and the familiar Brahmini duck or ruddy sheldrake, which is commonly seen in pairs on the *chars* of the Padma and Jamuna. Teal are more common and include the common teal, blue winged teal or garganey, whistling teal and, commonest of all, the little cotton teal. Good snipe shooting may be had; common, pintail, painted and jack snipe are all found in the cold weather. Other water birds are numerous, *e.g.*, herons, snippets, coots, dabchicks, red-shanks, kingfishers and the small cormorant. Of other game birds, those that are found only on land are not many in number. Plover and green pigeon are frequent and the common grey quail and button quail are occasionally shot. The common black partridge is not infrequent, but the marsh partridge or kyah is rare.

Fish.

Fish abound in most of the rivers and *bils*, and very large catches of *hilsa* are made in the Padma in the rainy season. The *hilsa* caught in this portion of its course are sent to the whole of Northern Bengal as well as to Calcutta. In fact it mainly supplies the Calcutta market in the *hilsa* season, the catches being railed to the capital, while steamers proceeding to Dacca and Chittagong are loaded with hundreds of boxes. An enquiry made in 1907 showed that the weight of fish despatched from Sāraghāt (the old station on the bank of the Padma now replaced by Ishurdih) was 4,722 maunds, while 32,042 maunds were despatched from Goalundo to places in Bengal alone. In addition to *hilsa* large catches are made of many other varieties of fish. The most valuable belong to the carp family, such as *rohit* or *rui* and *mirgal*, or consist of Siluridae or cat fishes, such as *boail* and *māgur*. The *rui* and *boail* caught in the Padma sometimes weigh over 30 seers and the *bāghair* (a fresh-water shark) as much as 2 maunds. Crocodiles every year carry off a few unwary bathers in the Padma, and during the rains one or two make their way into the smaller rivers.

Besides regular fishing, *polo* fishing is an old pastime indulged in by the villagers in the summer. The villagers

are called to the fishing by the blowing of a horn, and men, women and children, sometimes numbering hundreds, troop with *polos* in hand to the nearest *bil.* The *polo* is a bell-shaped split-bamboo trap, with a small opening on the top and no bottom. The fisherman walks into the water, presses down the *polo* in front of him, and then, stooping down, plunges his hands through the opening at the top and gropes in the mud for the fish that are trapped. All are busy catching fish in the shallow water, which is soon churned into liquid mud, and in a few hours the *bil* is despoiled of fish.

CLIMATE. The climate is not characterised by great extremes of heat and rainfall, and may be described as equable. This is the result of the geographical situation of the district, which ensures it against the direct action of disturbing influences, such as the hot westerly winds of the west, the sea in the south, the strong monsoon current in the east and the Himalayas to the north. Being at the head of the Gangetic delta, it is much damper than districts further west. The hot dry west wind of the Gangetic valley is hardly felt, and during the greater part of the year the prevailing winds are easterly winds, which blow down the great valley of the Brahmaputra, or south-easterly breezes, which come up from the Bay of Bengal.

The estuary of the Meghna is sufficiently near to expose the district to the danger of occasional cyclones and during the months of May and October that immediately precede and follow the monsoon, both the Padma and Jamuna are subject to sudden and violent storms, which are dangerous to the small craft that ply on their waters.

Temperature. Mean temperature increases from 64° in January to 83° in April, dropping one degree in May. It remains constant at 83° during the monsoon months and falls to 72° in November and 65° in December. The highest average maximum temperature is 94° in April. The highest average minimum is 79° in July-August, while the lowest average minimum is 51° in January.

Rainfall. Rainfall is very light from November to February, increases from March to May, the season of local disturbances, and continues uniform at about 11 inches during the monsoon months June to September. In May and October the rainfall is about 7½ and 4 inches, respectively, and is due to the occasional incursion of cyclonic storms, when heavy rain may fall for several days at a time. The main causes of such rainfall are shallow depressions, which frequently form during the monsoon months, and the shifting winds, which, with the small

oscillations of the atmospheric pressure and the high humidity then prevailing, are sufficient to maintain daily and, at times, heavy rainfall. The following table gives the salient meteorological statistics for Sirājganj (49 feet above sea level) :—

| — | Temperature. | | | | | Humidity. | Rainfall. | | Barometer. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean. | Mean maximum. | Mean minimum. | Daily. | Month. | Mean. | Inches. | Days. | Mean. |
| January ... | 64 | 76 | 51 | 25 | 28 | 91 | 0·4 | 1 | 30·03 |
| February ... | 66 | 79 | 52 | 27 | 36 | 85 | 0·9 | 2 | 29·97 |
| March ... | 77 | 89 | 64 | 25 | 34 | 79 | 1·3 | 2 | 29·88 |
| April ... | 83 | 94 | 72 | 22 | 28 | 81 | 3·2 | 5 | 29·77 |
| May ... | 82 | 90 | 74 | 16 | 19 | 85 | 7·7 | 10 | 29·71 |
| June ... | 83 | 89 | 77 | 12 | 16 | 90 | 11·8 | 13 | 29·58 |
| July ... | 83 | 88 | 78 | 10 | 11 | 92 | 11·6 | 14 | 29·57 |
| August ... | 83 | 87 | 79 | 8 | 10 | 92 | 11·3 | 14 | 29·62 |
| September ... | 83 | 88 | 78 | 10 | 12 | 91 | 9·7 | 12 | 29·72 |
| October ... | 80 | 87 | 73 | 14 | 21 | 88 | 4·2 | 5 | 29·86 |
| November ... | 72 | 82 | 62 | 20 | 27 | 90 | 0·5 | 1 | 29·96 |
| December ... | 65 | 77 | 53 | 24 | 29 | 91 | 0·1 | ... | 30·02 |
| *Year* ... | *77* | *86* | *68* | *18* | *23* | *88* | *62·7* | *79* | *29·81* |

## CHAPTER II.

### HISTORY.

CREATION OF THE DISTRICT.

WHEN the district was acquired by the British in 1765 under the grant of Diwāni to the East India Company, it was mainly included in the Bheturia Chak (division) of the great Rājshāhi zamīndāri (a division which also comprised parts of the modern districts of Mālda, Rājshāhi and Bogra) and partly in the zamīndāris of Barabāju and Kāgmāri, of which the latter is now in Mymensingh. At the time of the Permanent Settlement the greater part of it was included in the district of Rājshāhi. It owed its creation as a separate charge in 1828 to the prevalence of dacoities, which were facilitated, here as in other parts of Bengal, by the paucity of responsible officers of Government, the inefficiency of the police and the connivance or active abetment of the zamīndārs. Dacoits roamed about the country in large bands, and the consequent lawless and disturbed condition of the country may be gathered from a report submitted in 1808 by Mr. E. Strachey, Third Judge of Circuit. He wrote :—

"That dacoity is very prevalent in Rājshāhi has been often stated, but if its vast extent were known, if the scenes of horror, the murders, the burnings, the excessive cruelties, which are continually prepetrated here, were properly represented to Government, I am confident that some measures would be adopted to remedy the evil. Certainly there is not an individual belonging to the Government who does not anxiously wish to save the people from robbery and massacre, yet the situation of the people is not sufficiently attended to. It cannot be denied that, in point of fact, there is no protection for persons or property and that the present wretched, mechanical, inefficient system of police is a mere mockery. The dacoits know much better than we how to preserve their power; they have with great success established a respect for their orders by speedy, certain and severe punishments and by judicious arrangements for removing obstacles and for facilitating the execution of their wishes . . ."

"On my way through the northern part of this zilla I had some conversation with a zamīndār and a police-daroga, who have distinguished themselves by their exertions to apprehend dacoits. They told me that it was impossible to get any information about the great dacoits, but the houses of all the principal inhabitants were open to them: yet nobody dare mention their names for fear of being murdered. They attributed the success of the dacoits to the same cause that everybody else does, namely, the protection given them by the zamīndārs and police-officers and other people of power and influence in the country. Everything I hear and see and read on this subject serves to convince me of the truth of this statement."

Equally striking is the more general statement made in a minute written by Lord Minto, the Governor-General, in 1810:—

"A monstrous and disorganised state of society existed under the eye of the supreme British authorities, and almost at that very seat of Government to which the country might justly look for safety and protection. The mischief could not wait for a slow remedy; the people were perishing almost in our sight. Every week's delay was a doom of slaughter and torture against the defenceless inhabitants of very populous countries."

Dacoity had long been specially prevalent in the neighbourhood of the Chalan Bil, where the exploits of three bandit chiefs Rāma, Syāma and Beni Ray are still remembered. Hamilton's *East India Gazetteer* (1828)* informs us—

"In the vicinity of Hurrial† the face of the country is exceedingly wild and woody and otherwise fitted for the harbour of dacoits. For the protection of the jeels or shallow lakes a swift guard boat of sixteen oars is retained commanded by a jamadar, who is specially recommended to superintend the Chillan (*sic*) Jeel, the largest expanse of water of this description in Bengal."

The necessity for establishing law and order in Pābna and for ensuring security of life and property among its inhabitants are sufficiently apparent from the following extract from the Resolutions of Government, dated 16th October 1828:—

"His Lordship in Council trusts that the measures adopted by the Magistrate for improving the efficiency of the police,

* Vol. II, p. 448

† The modern Hāndiāl.

more especially the better regulation of the village watch, will be attended with benefit. The most important point however suggested for the determination of Government is the plan proposed for establishing a Joint-Magistrate's station at Pubna, for which very strong arguments are urged both by the Superintendent and by Mr. Vibart. The distance at which the eastern parts of the district are situated from the Sudder Station must certainly prevent any efficient control being exercised over the subordinate police-officers in that quarter, and must also increase the difficulty of instituting a strict scrutiny into the conduct of the zamindars and the heads of villages, to whose indifference, if not actual connivance, much of the evils arising from dacoity is mainly to be attributed.

"The objections however to the formation of any new establishments precludes the Governor-General in Council from fixing a Joint-Magistrate permanently at Pubna. It appears preferable to depute an officer to that part of the district to take charge of the thannahs noted in the margin of the Rajeshahy and Jessore Zillahs during the approaching dry season to act under the instructions of the Superintendent of Police for the purpose of inquiring into the conduct of the zamindars and heads of villages in the performance of the duties required of them by the regulations for regulating the village watch and for the general improvement of the police in those parts.

| | |
|---|---|
| Pubna<br>Shahzadpore<br>Raygunge<br>Kheytooparah | of Zillah Rajeshahy. |
| Durrumpore<br>Custeea<br>Modapore | of Zillah Jessore. |

"The Governor-General in Council accordingly resolves that the thannahs above-mentioned shall be placed under a Joint-Magistrate to be nominally stationed at Pubna, but whose special duty it will be to visit every part of his jurisdiction for the purpose above stated. The officer deputed will, in addition to the usual deputation allowance, be allowed to draw travelling charges at the rate of 300 rupees per mensem to cover every expense for an office tent or cutcherry. The Magistrate of Rajeshahye will be directed to place under the Joint-Magistrate such part of the Omlah of the Registrar's court as may be required to enable him to conduct the duties of his office with efficiency, and the officers so transferred will be entitled to draw the diet allowance usually granted to native officers when employed on special duties of this nature.

"It does not appear to Government requisite that a Jail should be established at Pubna. The officers on deputation will

be allowed a suitable guard from the Provincial Battalion at Moorshedabad for the custody of the prisoners under examination, and when the investigation into a prisoner's case shall have been concluded, he should be sent in charge of the Police Burkundazes to the Magistrate in order that he may undergo confinement in the jail of the Zillah or be brought to trial before the Court of Circuit as the order passed in the case of such prisoner may direct."

On the same day orders were issued appointing Mr. Mills, acting Joint-Magistrate at Mālda, to be temporary Joint-Magistrate at Pābna, and the Magistrate of Rājshāhi was directed to administer to him on his arrival at Pābna the oath of officiating Joint-Magistrate of Pābna. Seven weeks later the thāna of "Coksa" (Khoksa) was transferred from Jessore to the jurisdiction of the Joint-Magistrate of Pābna.

The appointment of the Joint-Magistrate was made permanent in 1832, when he was also appointed an independent Deputy Collector. In 1837 the district was placed under the Sessions Judge of Rājshāhi; and in 1845 Governmemt issued orders to the Joint-Magistrate which in effect made Sirājganj a subdivisional headquarters. These orders are of interest as showing that the administration was still far from stereotyped, for the Joint-Magistrate had to draw up rules regulating the duties of his subordinate and the relations between them. ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGES.

"It has been resolved to put your Deputy Mr. Barry in charge of Thanahs Shahzadpore in Pubnah, Roygunge in Bograh, and Serajgunge in Mymensingh, making the latter his headquarters, unless, on local examination, there should be found any objection to it. You are requested to depute Mr. Barry with as little delay as practicable to Serajgunge, for the purpose of examining the locality and reporting upon it, and, if it should be found suitable, of superintending, under instructions from yourself, the building of a Bungalow and Cutcherry at an aggregate cost not exceeding Rs. 2,000. You will also be pleased to report how soon Mr. Barry will be able to take up his residence in his subdivision, and to assume charge of the Thanahs of Serajgunge, Roygunge, and Shahzadpore, and you will submit for approval a set of rules, defining the duties to be performed by him and the degree of control to be exercised by yourself, taking care that the latter be not too minute.

"With reference to the proposed including of Thannah Hurryal in the above Circle, I am directed to state that

instructions will be given to you as soon as you may be able to report after communication with Mr. Barry, and receiving his report of the examination of the locality, whether such an arrangement would be more convenient to the bulk of the inhabitants of Hurryal than that now in force, or in other words, whether the means of communication between that Thannah and Serajgunge are easier than those between it and Pubnah."

A postcript was added :—" It is to be understood that Thannahs Roygunge and Serajgunge will still remain respectively under the general control of the Joint-Magistrate of Bograh and the Magistrate of Mymensingh, and that commitments in cases originating in those Thannahs will not be made to the Quarterly Sessions at Pubnah."

The river Jamuna was fixed as the eastern boundary in 1848, and owing to a change in its course thāna Sirājganj was transferred from Mymensingh to Pābna in 1855. Four years later the present system of a Magistrate-Collector for the district was introduced; and in the same year (1857) three thānas which had been hitherto part of Pābna, viz., Pāngsa (now in Farīdpur), Khoksa (now in Nadia) and Balia Kandi (now in Farīdpur) were formed into a separate subdivision of "Comercolly" (Kumārkhāli in Nadia). The district still included a large tract to the south of the Padma, but in 1863 Kushtia was transferred to Nadia: while in 1871 Pāngsa was transferred to Farīdpur and Kumārkhāli to Nadia, thus making the Padma the southern boundary of the district. In 1875 Rāiganj was transferred back to Pābna from Bogra; and in 1879 a separate Judgeship for Pābna and Bogra was created.

MUTINY OF 1857.

During the mutiny of 1857 anxiety was at first felt for the district of Pābna, as it was thought not improbable that the Dacca mutineers might cross to Sirājganj *en route* to the north-west, particularly with the prospect of plunder which that rich and important mârt held out. Mr. Ravenshaw, the Magistrate, sent a hasty summons to all the planters and other Europeans in the district, which was promptly responded to. A well mounted and well equipped body of horsemen soon collected at the Sadar station, and moved at once to Sirājganj, where Mr. Barry had fortified his house, and with a small gunboat on the river was prepared to resist all comers. He had previously been furnished by Government with a couple of 3-lbs. howitzers, with other arms and a supply of ammunition. A loyal zamīndār, named Bijay Gobind Chaudhuri of Tāntipāra, at the same time offered to place guards at his own expense between

Dacca and Pābna to prevent the mutineers from advancing on the latter place. There was however no inroad into the district, for the Dacca mutineers marched by Jamālpur and Mymensingh and reaching the Brahmaputra crossed over to the Rangpur district near Bagwa Ghāt.*

THE AGRARIAN DISTURBANCES OF 1873.

In 1872-73 agrarian trouble broke out in the district, originating in the Yusufshāhi *pargana* of the Sirājganj subdivision. The actual rental of the estates in the disturbed *pargana* had not been raised for some years, but the zamīndārs were in the habit of realizing heavy cesses of various sorts, which had gone on for so long that it was scarcely clear what portion of their collections was rent and what illegal cesses. Whereas under the law rents could only be enhanced by a regular process after notice duly given in the previous year, no such notices had been served, but the zamīndārs, or many of them, attempted irregularly to effect a large enhancement both by direct increase of rent and by the consolidation of rent and cesses. Besides this enhancement they stipulated that the ryots were to pay all cesses that might be imposed by Government, and that occupancy ryots should be made liable to ejectment if they quarrelled with their zamīndār. Enquiries with respect to illegal exactions by zamīndārs, and the apprehended extension to the district of the Road Cess Act, under which the rental was registered, induced the zamīndārs to try to persuade their tenants to give them written engagements. Some zamīndārs in 1872 actually succeeded in this, and the terms of the engagements granted were very unfair to the ryots. These were partially registered, but before the process was complete they repudiated the authority of the registering agent.

The difficulties were enhanced by disputes as to measurement, which all over Bengal had always afforded a fertile source of quarrel between landlord and tenant, there being no uniform standard and the local measuring-rod varying from *pargana* to *pargana* and almost from village to village. In Pābna especially there was extreme diversity of measuring standards. All the zamīndārs were not equally bad, but there were undoubtedly some among them who resorted to illegal

* Minute, dated the 30th September 1858, recorded by Sir F. Halliday, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, on "The Mutinies as they affected the Lower Provinces under the Government of Bengal, 1858."

pressure resulting in illegal enhancement; in cases where the shares were much subdivided special oppression was practised, and the quarrels among the sharers themselves had not a little to do with the outbreaks.

At first, the ryots gave way for the most part, but later one or two villages, which had not been so submissive, gained success in the courts. One village stood out from the first; certain suits for enhanced rents were rejected on appeal after having been won in the Munsif's Court; a kidnapped ryot had been liberated and the zamīndār punished. These and other successes gradually turned the scale, and there was a reaction against exorbitant demands. In the spring the ryots commenced to organize themselves for systematic resistance. By the month of June the movement had spread over the whole of the Yusufshāhi *pargana*. The ryots calmly organized themselves into a league, and assumed the designation of *bidrohi* (rebels) under the influence of an intelligent leader and petty landholder, and peaceably informed the Magistrates that they had united. One Ishān Ray was known as Bidrohir Rāja, the rebel chief. The terms held out by the league were tempting, viz., the use of a very large *bigha* of measurement and very low rent, and it was not therefore necessary to resort to much intimidation to induce fresh villages to join. In some instances intimidation was resorted to with this object, but it was of a mild form.

Toward the latter end of June 1872 emissaries were sent in all directions to extend the league and large bands of villagers were formed. Persons who owed private grudges, and bad characters inspired by the hope of plunder, took advantage of these gatherings to turn them to their own ends and to commit excesses; but serious outrages by *boná-fide* tenants were not very numerous, and few houses were actually burnt and plundered. Stories of murders and of other outrages were current, but were without foundation. No one in the subdivision of Sirājganj was seriously hurt during the disturbances; no zamīndār's house was attacked, and nothing of considerable value was stolen. Such cases of violent crime as did occur were due to the criminal classes, who took advantage of the excitement, and the actual riots only lasted only from the middle of June to the 3rd July 1873. Up to the 1st July 269 villages had signified by petition that they had joined the union; after that ten or twelve more a day gave in their adherence.

On the 4th July the Government of Bengal issued the following proclamation :—

"Whereas in the district of Pābna, owing to attempts of zamīndārs to enhance rents and combinations of ryots to resist the same, large bodies of men have assembled at several places in a riotous and tumultuous manner, and serious breaches of peace have occurred. This is very gravely to warn all concerned that, while on the one hand the Government will protect the people from all force and extortion, and the zamīndārs must assert any claims they may have by legal means only, on the other hand the Government will firmly repress all violent and illegal action on the part of the ryots and will strictly bring to justice all who offend against the law, to whatever class they belong.

"The ryots and others who have assembled are hereby required to disperse and to prefer peaceably and quietly any grievances they may have. If they so come forward, they will be patiently listened to ; but the officers of Government cannot listen to rioters ; on the contrary, they will take severe measures against them. It is asserted by the people who have combined to resist the demands of the zamīndārs, that they are to be the ryots of Her Majesty the Queen, and of Her only. These people, and all who listen to them, are warned that the Government cannot and will not interfere with the rights of property as secured by law ; that they must pay what is legally due from them to those to whom it is legally due. It is perfectly lawful to unite in a peaceable manner to resist any excessive demands of the zamīndārs, but it is not lawful to unite to use violence and intimidation."

While the attitude of Government was thus made clear, measures were taken for the restoration of peace and order. Extra police were despatched to the district, whereupon rioting ceased almost immediately, after many arrests had been made, principally for rioting and illegal assembly, and 147 persons convicted. But there was no abatement of the combinations of the ryots and the movement spread through most of the Pābna district and into Bogra ; the ryots met the demand of the zamīndārs for too much by offering too little. The Lieutenant-Governor (Sir G. Campbell) did not see his way to interfere by legislation without raising large questions which could not be settled without long and difficult discussions. His course was to attempt to promote compromise by influence and advice. The zamīndārs were urged to offer reasonable terms

of present settlement and future security to the ryots, and the latter were strongly advised and urged to accept such terms as the Government officers thought reasonable. Considerable success attended these efforts.

Meanwhile there was a remarkable subsidence of unhealthy excitement. The organs of the zamīndārs urged direct Government interference by means of a Commission empowered to settle differences. The Government of India also suggested this solution. Sir George Campbell had been reluctant to appoint extra Munsifs to try the rent-cases, as he found that things settled themselves much more fairly by compromise. He saw that the whole question of the relations of landlords and tenants was being raised and doubted whether it would be possible to avoid some further revision of the rent law, as there was great difficulty in determining what rents were really payable. As to the appointment of a special Commission, he objected to one that would merely deal summarily with the differences between landlord and tenant, but expressed his acceptance of one that would deal thoroughly with the points at issue and settle them for a long time. In the end no special Commission was appointed: partly by compromise, partly by the natural movement of events, partly by the shadow of the impending famine of 1873-74, the Pābna difficulties to a very great extent settled themselves for the time. The dispute between landlords and tenants, in fact, remained in abeyance during the famine which postponed the adjustment of the rent question.

These rent disturbances of 1873 were however really the origin of the discussion and action which eventually led to the enactment of the Bengal Tenancy Act, I of 1885.*

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* C. E. Buckland, *Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors* (Calcutta 1901), volume I, pages 544-8; W. W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal* (1876), volume IX, pages 319—325.

# CHAPTER III.

## THE PEOPLE.

BETWEEN 1872 and 1881 the population of the district increased by 8·3 per cent., but part of the increase is attributable to the incompleteness of the first census. In 1891 there was a gain of 3·85 per cent., while in 1901 there was a further addition of 4·3 per cent., but between 1901 and 1911 the growth of population was retarded by adverse conditions, and the census of 1911 showed an increase of only 7,191 persons or one-half per cent. It would have been greater but for the loss of population caused by emigration; this was due mainly to cultivators moving over from the riparian tracts on the east to the districts of Rangpur and Goālpāra, where they found land on which to settle in place of their diluviated fields. The emigrants in fact outnumbered those who came and settled in the district either permanently or temporarily by 38,000. GROWTH OF POPULATION.

There was an increase of 12,515 or 2 per cent. in the Sadar subdivision, of which more than half was due to the employés engaged in the construction of the Hardinge bridge at Sāra. They numbered 7,154 and most of them came from outside the district; without them the Pābna thāna would have sustained a loss. The population declined in all the thānas of the Sirājganj subdivision, except the Sirājganj thāna; the decrease was mainly due to the emigration of cultivators to Rangpur and Goālpāra. But for emigration the subdivision, as a whole, would have shown an increase instead of a decrease.

During the decade 1911-21 conditions were even more unfavourable than in the preceding decade, malaria and influenza taking a heavy toll of life; the mortality caused by influenza alone in the two years 1918 and 1919 is estimated at a little over one per cent. of the population. The result of the census of 1921 was to show a decrease of 39,092 persons, representing 27 per cent. of the population. The salient statistics of this census are given in the statement below, from which it CENSUS OF 1921.

will be seen that the only progressive parts of the district were the Rāiganj and Tārās thanas. :—

| District, subdivision and police-station. | Population 1921. | Percentage of variation. 1911-21. | Percentage of variation. 1901-11. | Number of persons per square mile, 1921. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| District total ... | 1,389,494 | − 2·7 | + 0·5 | 828 |
| *Sadar subdivision* ... | 556,834 | − 7·1 | + 2·0 | 706 |
| Pābna ... ... | 104,942 | | | 801 |
| Atgharia ... | 30,217 | − 4·6 | + 2·3 | 444 |
| Sāra ... ... | 59,502 | | | 744 |
| Chātmohar ... | 75,583 | − 3·6 | + 1·9 | 630 |
| Faridpur ... | 50,309 | | | 519 |
| Sāinthia ... | 74,642 | − 10·2 | + 2·1 | 607 |
| Sujānagar ... | 78,037 | | | 780 |
| Bera (Mathura) ... | 83,602 | − 11·7 | + 7·2 | 1,194 |
| *Sirājganj subdivision* | 832,602 | + 0·4 | − 0·6 | 937 |
| Shāhzādpur ... | 160,345 | | − 2·3 | 1,445 |
| Chauhāli ... | 54,859 | | | 1,371 |
| Belkuchi ... | 74,202 | | | 1,159 |
| Ullāpāra ... | 129,996 | − 0·5 | − 1·3 | 730 |
| Kāmārkhanda ... | 43,042 | | | 1,076 |
| Sirājganj ... | 157,065 | | + 2·3 | 1,163 |
| Kāzipur ... | 98,115 | | | 943 |
| Rāiganj ... | 81,056 | + 6·1 | − 2·0 | 844 |
| Tārās ... ... | 33,980 | | | 281 |

**Density.** The average density of the population is 828 to the square mile, which is the highest in North Bengal. The other most densely populated districts are Bogra and Rangpur along the Brahmaputra and Rājshāhi and Mālda bordering on the Ganges. It is a curious phenomenon that in the case of both the Ganges and Brahmaputra the mean density rises according to the situation of the districts along the rivers' downward course,

and it has been suggested that this is due to their fertilizing powers increasing with the fall of the level of the land.

The land is most thickly populated in the Sirājganj subdivision, a fertile jute-growing tract, in which the drainage has not been obstructed by deserted river beds to the same extent as in the headquarters subdivision. There are extraordinary variations, the Shāhzādpur thāna supporting 1,445, and the Tārās thāna, where cultivation has not spread so much as elsewhere, only 281 persons to the square mile. The only thāna in the Sadar subdivision in which the district average is exceeded is Bera (Mathura), which, lying in the angle between the Padma and the Brahmaputra, is specially benefited by the deposit of silt brought down by those rivers.

MIGRATION.

Emigration from Pābna is largely determined by the abundance of *char* lands on the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra in the districts of Rangpur and Goālpāra (in Assam). These cheap and fertile lands are attracting a growing number of cultivators from the lower reaches in this district, where the riparian lands suffer from diluvion. Those who have lost their land by the ravages of the river, or whose holdings are reduced by subdivision to a size which involves a lowering of their standard of comfort, are shifting northwards to Rangpur and Goālpāra, where there is abundance of land to be had on easy terms, and where the pressure on the soil does not lead to the same competition for it. Prior to 1901 the movement did not go further than Rangpur and had attained no great dimensions. After 1901, the influx into that district increased enormously, and the emigrants overflowed across the provincial frontier into Goālpāra. The census of 1911 shewed that Pābna had sent 24,000 emigrants to Rangpur and 15,000 to Goālpāra. Elsewhere in North Bengal emigrants exceeded immigrants, and the only exception was Pābna, where the emigrants outnumbered the foreign born population by 38,000.

The jute trade attracts a considerable amount of foreign labour, more particularly from Bihar and the United Provinces. The immigrants, who only settle temporarily in the district, earn good wages and make large remittances home. There is a current saying in the district which is eloquent of its attractions to the impecunious, viz., *Jeā she Pābnadr nāi bhābna, i.e.*, whoever comes to Pābna nevermore suffers want. There has also long been a volume of migration of Santāls and other aboriginals to reclaim jungle in Rāiganj and Tārās; locally these aboriginals are known generically as Bunas.

RELIGIONS.

Muhammadans, with a total strength of 1,053,571 persons, account for 77 per cent. of the population and are thrice as numerous as the Hindus, who number 334,332. The Farāzi element is strong among the Muhammadans of Sirājganj. There are 667 Animists, nearly all aboriginals enumerated in the Rāiganj and Tārās thānas.

Two Christian missions are at work in the district, the South Australian Baptist Mission at the headquarters town of Pābna and the Tasmanian Baptist Mission at Sirājganj. The former was established in 1890 and the latter in 1897, but neither has made much progress in proselytism. The aggregate number of Christians found in the district in 1921 was only 455, including Europeans.

Sambhu-chandis.

A Hindu sect which calls for mention is that of the Sambhuchandis, so called after the name of its founder, who lived about 90 years ago. It is said that he was a fisherman, who became the favourite disciple of a Vaishnava, whom he had ferried across a river. From the latter he received superhuman powers and established a sect, whose cardinal principle is *Guru Satya*, *i.e.*, the Guru is Truth. They worship Rādha-Krishna and have a *math* at Chitholia, with an hereditary *mahanth*, who is said to have disciples not only in Pābna but also in Rangpur and as far afield as Assam.

TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

The great mass of the people live in villages, the rural population accounting for nearly 97 per cent. of the total. There are only two towns, Pābna with 19,343 inhabitants and Sirājganj with 25,518; neither tends to attract the people away from their villages to any extent, for their population has risen only by 909 and 2,404, respectively since, 1901.

PRINCIPAL CASTES. Namasudra.

Numerically the strongest caste is the Namasudra, of whom nearly one-fourth is found in the Shāhzādpur thāna. There are eight sub-castes, viz., Halia, Chāsi, Jalia, Karal, Karāti, Nalo, Kora and Kahār. These are all functional: the Halia and Chāsi are cultivators, the Jalia and Karal are fishermen, the Karāti is a wood-sawyer, the Nalo makes reed mats, the Kora works as an earth-worker and the Kahār as a palanquin-bearer. The Halia, Chāsi and Karāti are superior to and claim to be quite separate from the others: while they will intermarry among themselves, they will not marry or eat with the lower groups. They are raising their position in the social scale, *e.g.*, they will not eat food cooked by any but good Brahmans, and breaches of caste rules, especially in the matter

of forbidden marriages or degrading occupations, are visited with prompt punishment under an organized pānchāyat system.

The Mālos, who come next in numerical strength, form the majority of the fishermen of the district, their fellows and competitors being the Jalia Kaibarttas and Rājbansis. They are votaries of Vaishnavism, and as an address of courtesy they style one another *Baishnaber beta* or *Baishnaber beti*. As a class they are sober and thrifty; seldom drinking wine, though they will smoke *gānja* when working during the rains; peaceful men, seldom coming to the law courts unless backed by their landlords; rather timid and inoffensive, as a result of which they are apt to be bullied by the sturdy Muhammadans of the *chars*. They are backward in education, but a Mālo of village Sātbāria in thāna Sujānagar has taken the M. A. degree and become a college professor. Mālo.

Caste government is in the hands of pānchāyats in each Mālo village. There are standing committees of three to seven members. Membership is hereditary, and the most competent becomes Parāmānik or headman. The powers of the pānchāyat are comprehensive. Without its sanction no marriage can take place; and a certain proportion, generally 5 per cent., of the money paid by the bridegroom to the bride's father (which varies from Rs. 100 to Rs. 250) goes to it and is divided among the members. The pānchāyat also fixes the number of feasts to be given on the occasion of a marriage as well as the number of guests to be invited to each. The offences of adultery and abduction of women are dealt with and punished by it.

About fifteen years a movement was set on foot in the caste to stop the practice of widows selling fish in the market. An association with this object was formed in Nadia and at its instance the pānchāyats in Pābna, Sujānagar, Mathura and Chātmohar took up the idea, the relatives of the widows being fined and degraded if they allowed them to attend markets. The common title of the Mālos is Hāldar.

Among the Kāyasths, the Barendra aud Bangaja sub-castes predominate, Uttar Rārhis and Dakshin Rārhis being found in small numbers. Some families, who describe themselves as belonging to the Bahattarghar (or 72 families) class are also found in the district: theyare believed to be descendants of the indigenous Kāyasths of Bengal, who were supplanted by those who migrated there from Kanauj, but they are becoming absorbed by inter-marriage with the poorer members of the Barendra and Bangaja sub-castes. Some years ago an association Kāyasth

of the Barendra Kayasths was formed at Pābna with the object of obtaining recognition as Kshattriyas. Formerly the Kāyasths used the title Dās after their family name, *e.g.*, Kālikrishna Ghosh Dās, but of late years the Kshattriya title of Barman has been adopted in its place. The Kāyasths generally man the higher professions and Government service, or are zamīndārs, *tālukdārs* or *jotdārs*, never cultivating with their own hands; but some years ago representative Kāyasths and Brahmans of the district passed a resolution that agriculture is an honourable calling sanctioned by the *Sāstras*, which can be followed by the higher castes, and practical effect was given to it by some gentlemen actually cultivating a piece of land in the hope that they might encourage others to have an independent occupation and not be always dependent on Government and private employment. The idea of the dignity of manual labour was however short lived.

Shāha.

The Shāhas of Pābna are generally merchants and traders, but some are zamīndārs and some follow the higher professions, *e.g.*, are pleaders, doctors, etc. They are divided into two main classes, Rārhi and Barendra. The Barendras claim to be superior to the Rārhis largely, it seems, because they took the leading part in advancing the claims of the caste to be recognized as Vaisyas and because it was found that Rārhi Shāhas of Nadia and some districts of West Bengal dealt in liquor, some Shāhas of Rānāghāt holding excise shops in Pābna.

The Shāhas are fond of using the title Chaudhuri: as soon as a rich member of the caste acquires landed property, he assumes the designation of Shāha Chaudhuri. Of late years there has been a tendency to affix the title of Vaisya after the family name.

NEWSPAPERS.

Two Bengali newspapers are published in the district, viz., the *Pābna (Bogra) Hitaishi*, which was started in 1906, and the *Suraj*, which is of more recent creation. Both are weekly publications.

ASSOCIATIONS.

There is a District Congress Committee at Pābna and a Subdivisional Congress Committee at Sirājganj, in which has been merged a body known as the People's Association. Village Congress Committees have also been started in a number of villages, *e.g.*, Majnabāri, Khās Rājbāri, Maijbāri, Sultānāra, Sripur, Bhāngarseo and Dipantar Char in the Kāzipur thāna, Ullāpāra, Pāngāsi and Chandaikona in the Rāiganj thāna, Sthal, Nauhatta, Chaluhara and Sadia Chāndpur in the Chauhāli thāna. Other political associations of recent date are the Rastra Kendra Samiti at Sujānagar, the object of which is

the furtherance of the non-co-operation movement, the Tilak Swarāj Sangha at Bera, which has a similar purpose, and the Khilāfat Committee at Sirājganj.

Anjumāns or Muhammadan associations have been established at Pābna, Sirājganj and Shāhzādpur, to promote the welfare of the Muhammadan community in matters social, political and educational. Other Islamic bodies are the Anjumān Society at Salanga in the Rāiganj thāna and the Khademal Islām Society at Sirājganj, which collects and utilizes funds for charitable purposes. Among Hindu associations may be mentioned the Bera Hari Sabha, which holds meetings at Bera every Sunday afternoon, and the Arya Dharma Prachārini Sabha at Sirājganj, which invites learned Hindu gentlemen to expound the *Sāstras*. There is also a Brahmo Sabha at Sirājganj, as well as a branch of the Ramkrishna Mission, which helps the distressed and gives relief to the sick and suffering.

A Merchants' Association has been organized at Pābna for the safeguarding of commercial interests, and at Sirājganj there are two reading clubs, viz., the Chhatra Samiti (Victoria School) and the Sanit Library.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES.*

The first co-operative society registered in Pābna district was the Bharenga Co-operative Urban Bank, Ltd., which dates from the 11th November 1906. This was followed almost immediately by the organization of three agricultural co-operative credit societies with unlimited liability in the same neighbourhood. During the next four years the movement spread slowly in the Mathura and Sirājganj thānas, but between 1910 and 1912 a much more rapid and extensive advance took place, societies, mainly of the agricultural credit type with unlimited liability, being formed in Pābna, Sainthia, Shāhzādpur and Chauhāli thānas.

The Bharenga Co-operative Urban Bank, Ltd., in addition to financing its own individual members, also financed the rural credit societies in its neighbourhood. The rural credit societies in other parts of the district, however, experienced considerable difficulty in securing finance, and although the organization in 1909 of the Pābna Urban Co-operative Bank, Ltd., effected some amelioration in the position, its funds were insufficient to cope

* This account has been kindly contributed by Mr. J. T. Donovan, I.C.S., Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Bengal. It has been prepared from material supplied by Babu Bata Krishna Das, Divisional Auditor of Co-operative Societies, Rajshahi Division (Naogaon), Rai Sahib Tarak Nath Maitra, B.L., of Pabna and Khan Bahadur Wasimuddin Ahmad, B.L., M.L.C., Pabna, and from the annual reports of the Registrar.

with the demands of the rapidly increasing number of rural co-operative credit societies.

In 1912 the original Co-operative Credit Societies Act of 1904 was repealed and a new Act, the Co-operative Societies Act (II of 1912) was passed. This Act is of much wider scope than the Act it replaced, and among its provisions is one for the registration of societies, membership of which consists wholly or partly of other societies. Pābna was one of the first areas to take advantage of this provision, and in 1912 the Pābna Central Co-operative Bank, Ltd., was organised, its main function being the financing of affiliated rural credit societies. As a result of this new formation, the development, which had hitherto tended to be confined to the east of the district, spread to the north and west. In 1906-07 there were only three rural societies in the district. In 1913-14 there were 179, and the number rapidly increased till in 1918-19 there were 372 societies and in 1920-21 there were 490.

During this second period three new Central Co-operative Banks were formed in the district, at Ullāpāra, Sirājganj and Shāhzādpur, and at present two more are in contemplation at Tāntiband and Bhanguria. In addition, about half a dozen credit societies with limited liability came into existence for the benefit of middle class people who are not dependent on agriculture, and about two dozen credit societies sprang up among poorer people following professions other than agriculture, *e.g.*, Goālas, fishermen, oilmen, blacksmiths and carpenters.

The Pābna Central Co-operative Bank, Ltd., received unexpectedly large deposits and this led to a certain amount of careless organization. The Central Bank had to find investments for its money, and rural societies were organised *ad hoc*, the education of the members of these societies in co-operative principles being completely neglected. The inevitable consequence ensued, and about 1917 great abuses were brought to light, and the stability of the Central Bank and its societies was seriously threatened. The danger was enhanced by a succession of bad crops, low prices for jute and high prices of cloth and other imported necessaries consequent on the conditions brought about by the war, as well as by the erosion of the Bharenga area, great tracts of which were cut away by the encroching river Jamuna (Brahmaputra). In this serious crisis the Bengal Provincial Co-operative Federation, Ltd., came to the assistance of the Pābna Central Co-operative Bank, Ltd., with about three lakhs of rupees, and confidence was again restored.

The Directors then set out upon a campaign of reconstruction and education. Bad societies were closed; unwieldy societies were split up; supervisors were appointed; a library was formed in the Central Bank and books and pamphlets on co-operative subjects were freely distributed among the public; lectures were delivered; conferences were organised; the magic lantern was utilized at these conferences and lectures, which dealt not only with co-operative subjects but with the improvement of agriculture and sanitation. As a result of these measures considerable improvement has set in, and although the societies still feel the effects of their early neglect, they are in a much more hopeful condition, and they look forward to a brighter future.

The dangers referred to in the preceding paragraph were confined to the societies affiliated to the Pābna and Shāhzādpur central banks. Those affiliated to the Ullāpāra and Sirājganj central banks were from the beginning better organised, better educated and better supervised; and in consequence they escaped these dangers.

The Pābna Central Co-operative Bank, Ltd., is the largest in Bengal, if not in India. Its paid-up share capital amounts to Rs. 1,17,378; its deposits and loans amount to Rs. 8,45,485; and its other funds, created out of profits, amount to Rs. 1,15,687. It owns a very substantial building in Pābna and employs a large staff in its office and amongst the societies. The other central banks are smaller institutions, the working capital of Sirājganj being about 2 lakhs, of Ullāpāra about one lakh and of Shāhzādpur something between half a lakh and 1 lakh of rupees. The total working capital of the four central banks in the district in June 1921 was 15¼ lakhs of rupees; of the 490 rural credit societies 16½ lakhs; and of the 35 non-agricultural societies 2¼ lakhs.

The number of individuals who were members of the various societies in June 1921 was :—of central banks 518, of agricultural societies 16,242, of non-agricultural societies 1,781, a total of 18,541. As the population of the district is in round figures 1,400,000, it will appear, if we assume the average family to consist of 5 persons, that one out of every 15 families is represented in co-operative societies.

It may be observed that here, as indeed all over India, the main co-operative development has been in the direction of co-operative credit. Signs of widening of the co-operative horizon are now visible in a few societies for production and

distribution which have come into existence quite recently, while the co-operative sale of agricultural produce is now also receiving attention. In a country like India, and indeed in all agricultural countries, it is recognized that the most suitable and most easily assimilated form of co-operation is at first co-operative credit. Its educative value is very great and it prepares the ground for further co-operative activity. There is, therefore, good reason to hope that other forms of co-operation may be introduced successfully into the district in the future. Meantime the Co-operative Credit Societies can claim a very considerable effect upon the rate of interest in the district, the money-lender's rate having now fallen from the old usurious heights to something approaching that of the co-operative societies. In view of the enormous borrowings of cultivators it will thus appear that the societies have saved the agriculture of this district directly and indirectly many lakhs annually. In addition to this the societies have been of considerable educational value, teaching the people the benefit of organization and corporate activity, of thrift and restraint, and, through the conferences and lectures already referred to, of better agriculture and sanitation.

The pioneers of co-operation in Pābna were Rai Sahib P. N. Choudhuri of Bharenga and Khān Bahādur Wasimuddin Ahmed, B.L., M.L.C., of Pābna, and its greatest supporter there to-day is Rai Sāhib Tārak Nāth Maitra, B.L., of Pābna.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PUBLIC HEALTH.

**GENERAL CONDITIONS.** INUNDATION is an important factor in determining the health conditions of Pābna. A large portion of the district, especially those tracts which border on the Jamuna, is subject to annual inundations. The higher the flood, and the greater the consequent flushing of the country, the less is the incidence of malarial fever. During the months of June to August, the greater part of the district goes under water, and this is a healthy season. The curve of malaria rises with the first onset of the rains, but falls as the land goes under water, to rise again as the rain stops and the land reappears covered with pools of stagnant water which favour the breeding of mosquitoes. October and November are usually the unhealthiest months. The high mortality from fever in the cold season is partly ascribed to the fact that from want of suitable clothing the people are not able to stand the cold and fall easy victims to malarial fever and its sequelæ.

The beneficial results of flushing by the rivers and the deterioration caused by their failure have long been recognised in this district. In a report submitted in 1871 the Collector (Mr. W. V. G. Tayler) remarked :—

"Within the district are tracts, at places miles in extent, almost without a ryot, and there has been a time when they were as highly cultivated as the best tracts are now. These results are generally due to the simple cause that the rivers' inundations have ceased to extend so far. This would not immediately, or necessarily at all, depopulate the villages, were it not for ensuing causes. The action of the river removes evils as well as renews the soil. It keeps open the drainage of the country by its flow, and where the tide can get in, what would become foul and stagnant rain water drains out. When the river ceases to keep open the *jolas* and water-courses, they become gradually choked up and all the hollows of the plain becomes an unhealthy *bil*. This breeds fever. The prosperity and energy of the ryots die away; they allow their own drinking water to

become foul and the jungles to hem them in, while the widening circle of the *bil* thrusts them outwards. Sickness increases, cultivation decreases, and the small remnant are driven away by the wild beasts. This is happening at present within a few miles of the Sadar station, as it has happened over and over again in the interior."

Again in the Statistical Account of Bengal, Volume IX, published in 1876, it was stated that the swampy country to the west near the Chalan Bil and Bara Bil was "formerly very populous and flourishing, as is proved by the number of tanks, temples, and brick residences which are still to be found there. About fifty years ago, the neighbourhood became unhealthy, probably owing to an alteration in the course of the rivers. It was to a great extent depopulated, and the sites of large villages fell back into jungle. It has within the last fifteen years been re-peopled, Bunas or hill-men from Chota Nāgpur being the first settlers."

MALARIA.

Malaria is most prevalent in those localities, such as Dulai and Tārās, where *bils* and swamps abound, with water which lies stagnant almost throughout the year except in years of excessive floods, and also where the river channels have silted up or are silting up and the proper drainage of the country has been interfered with. Consequently the Sadar subdivision, an area of silted-up river-beds and marshy swamps, which was devastated by fever epidemics in the eighties of last century, is more unhealthy than the Sirājganj subdivision, where the drainage is not obstructed to the same extent by the high banks of dead rivers. As regards local distribution, malaria has its strongest hold in thānas Sāinthia (Dulai) and Chātmohar in the Sadar subdivision and in thānas Rāiganj and Ullāpāra in the Sirājganj subdivision. The types of malarial fever most commonly met with in this district are (1) quotidian and (2) tertian intermittents or agues, and (3) remittent fever with its varieties, such as bilious remittent, typhoid remittent and gastric remittent.

INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC OF 1918-19.

The influenza epidemic which affected Pābna, as well as other districts in 1918-19, is a new and lamentable feature in the public health annals of Bengal. Epidemics of influenza have attacked different parts of the world on at least five occasions during the past hundred years, but none of them have affected this country as seriously as the outbreak of 1918-19. It spread with extraordinary rapidity owing to the greatly improved communications; and, owing probably to the fact that its appearance coincided with a time of scarcity, in which the

prices of foodstuffs ruled high, it exhibited a virulence far beyond that shown by the disease on former occasions.

The first intimation of the disease in Bengal was received in June 1918 about the same time as its appearance was reported in Bombay and many other parts of India. It was recognised almost simultaneously in Calcutta and a number of other towns including Pābna. Calcutta appears to have been the main disseminating centre for the disease and the rapidity of its spread is ascribed to the extensive railway communications of the province. The first epidemic outbreak, which lasted about six weeks, was characterized by the rapidity with which it spread, the large number attacked, the mildness of the disease, the absence of complications and the fact that it was chiefly confined to towns. This outbreak, subsided about the middle of August and for about a month the disease appeared to have disappeared. But in the middle of September 1918 there was a recrudescence and a second epidemic wave passed over the province, which, although not quite so widespread as the first, was infinitely more serious, being characterized by a great frequency of dangerous respiratory and other complications, which resulted in many instances in an appalling mortality. On this occasion also villages were more severely affected than the towns. The epidemic continued throughout the early months of 1919, but during the period July to December 1919 influenza was far less prevalent than in the first half-year.

The incidence of the disease varied greatly among different classes of the population. Females suffered more severely than males, while children under ten and old people suffered less severely than young adults. Owing to the sudden onset and rapid spread of the epidemic, little could be done to check its ravages and both the medical and the sanitary organizations were powerless to devise measures adequate to the occasion. Moreover, the lack of knowledge of any real specific against the disease rendered efficient general treatment impossible. Pābna did not suffer so greatly as some other districts, but it is estimated that it lost rather over one per cent. of its population in the two years from influenza. The loss in the whole of Bengal is calculated to have been close upon 600,000 lives.

OTHER DISEASES.

The chief diseases after malarial fever are cholera, which generally breaks out in an epidemic form during the dry months when the water-supply becomes scanty and contaminated, small-pox, rheumatism and skin diseases. The district stands high in the list of areas affected with recurring epidemics

of small-pox ; during the last twenty years there have been at least three periods, viz., the years 1902-05, 1907-10 and 1917-20, in which it suffered from epidemics. *Kala-azar* is also found in the district, and it is difficult to distinguish it from malarial fever without having a microscopical examination of the blood.

HOSPITALS AND DISPENSARIES.

Fifty years ago there were only three dispensaries in the district, one at Pābna established in 1853, the second at Dulai established in 1855 and the third at Sirājganj established in 1867. There are now thirteen hospitals and dispensaries, the salient statistics of which for the year 1920 are given below :—

| — | Number of beds. | | Total of patients. | | Income. | Expenditure. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Men. | Women. | Indoor. | Outdoor. | | |
| | | | | | Rs. | Rs. |
| 1. Pābna Sadar Hospital ... | 21 | 6 | 416 | 29,578 | 13,194 | 10,483 |
| 2. Sirājganj Victoria Hospital | 22 | 8 | 555 | 19,442 | 15,359 | 14,594 |
| 3. Chak Sohāgpur (Dharam Dhar Charitable Dispensary. | ... | ... | ... | 6,345 | 1,615 | 1,600 |
| 4. Sthal-Basantapur Dispensary. | ... | ... | ... | 2,084 | 478 | 463 |
| 5. Kāzipur Dispensary ... | ... | ... | ... | 2,259 | 211 | 203 |
| 6. Sitlai ,, ... | ... | ... | ... | 4,611 | 1,517 | 1,202 |
| 7. Tā-ās ,, ... | ... | ... | ... | 6,794 | 2,203 | 1,734 |
| 8. Shāhzādpur ,, ... | ... | ... | ... | 20,774 | 3,792 | 3,224 |
| 9. Bera ,, ... | ... | ... | ... | 8,933 | 1,989 | 1,513 |
| 10. Tāntiband ,, ... | ... | ... | ... | 11,007 | 2,286 | 1,712 |
| 11. Rāiganj ,, ... | ... | ... | ... | 11,853 | 2,276 | 1,334 |
| 12. Chātmohar ,, ... | ... | ... | ... | 4,500 | 1,534 | 1,534 |
| 13. Bharenga ,, ... | ... | ... | ... | 4,385 | 2,032 | 1,489 |

VACCINATION.

In the municipalities of Pābna and Sirājganj vaccination is carried on free of charge at the public vaccine depôts by a salaried staff of municipal vaccinators. In rural areas the licensed system is in force, *i.e.*, vaccinations are performed by licensed vaccinators, who charge a fee of two annas for each successful vaccination ; since 1918-19, however, owing to the prevalence of epidemics of small-pox, the District Board has employed a number of salaried vaccinators in addition to the regular staff of licensed vaccinators. The number of vaccinators is regulated by the numbers of chaukidari union and varies from two to four for each thāna : on the average

there are altogether 38 to 40, but there is also a supplementary staff of 25 to 30 apprentice vaccinators. The Civil Surgeon was in charge of vaccination from 1892-93 to August 1921, since when supervision has been exercised by the District Health Officer of the District Board. The inspecting staff under the latter consists of an Inspector and two Sub-Inspectors, one for each subdivision.

Vaccination cannot be said to be popular in the district and meets with opposition from Farāzis and indifference from others. Practically it is only epidemics of small-pox that make the people resort to vaccination on an extensive scale. When there is no small-pox in the land, the operation is neglected. Thus, in the four years ending in 1920-21 the number of vaccinations performed annually was 62,072, 59,521, 83,602 and 53,741, and it is to be noted that the first three of these years were years of small-pox epidemics. The ratio of deaths from small-pox per thousand of the population in the four years was ·92, 1·49, 1·84 and ·28, respectively, the degree of protection afforded to infants being represented by the figures of 297, 207, 294 and 159 per mille. A comparison of these figures with those of the previous four years, viz., 1913-17, which were free from epidemics, is instructive, the number of vaccinations performed in them being only 37,535, 33,995, 43,343 and 40,979, respectively. The number of revaccinations performed during epidemics of small-pox is a further indication of the general feeling on the subject; the fact that 15,583, 21,713 and 37,701 revaccinations were performed during the last epidemic as compared with 2,255, 2,442 and 2,094 in the three years immediately preceding speaks for itself. The increase of vaccinations due to epidemics is, however, not so marked as elsewhere: even in the worst epidemic year, viz., 1919-20, the proportion of infants successfully vaccinated was only 294 per thousand: and there appears to have been a steady decline in the annual aggregate of vaccinations since 1913-14.*

* The above account of vaccination has been compiled from information kindly supplied by Dr. Sufi, Assistant Director of Public Health (Vaccination and Vital Statistics).

## CHAPTER V.

### NATURAL CALAMITIES.

GENERAL CONDITIONS.

PĀBNA is a deltaic district consisting of a low-lying silt deposit, covered by a network of waterways and bordered by two of the greatest rivers in India. The water in the rivers and channels is heavily laden with silt during the rains, and as their beds rise through the deposit on them, the water constantly tends to overflow its banks. The silt of the overflow is then deposited to a great extent on or near the banks which are consequently raised. The slope of the country is therefore away from and not towards the principal channels, so that the water in the numerous offshoots and distributaries flows from and not towards the main streams. A volume of turgid water thus spreads itself over the country, until leaving the silt behind, it finds an exit by fresh drainage channels. Moreover, the monsoon consists of a series of cyclonic depressions, which follow each other in close succession up the Bay of Bengal; and the district in normal years receives a large amount of rainfall. Artificial irrigation is therefore unnecessary. The cultivators are saved from the long wearing anxiety of hope deferred which their fellows elsewhere suffer during a year of capricious rainfall, and actual famine from lack of moisture is not a peril to be feared. So much is the contrary the case, that excess of water is the chief danger, floods of an excessive depth being liable to occur and cause partial ruin to the crops. Again misfortune, sudden and terrible, may come in a day or a night with a destructive cyclone, such as has swept over the district before now. Except for these occasional visitations the cultivators of Pābna are usually able to derive the benefit of high prices without the compensating disadvantage of short crops. The abundance of waterways also contributes greatly to their prosperity by rendering carriage easy and cheap, and they have the further advantage of railway transport, so that their produce can be easily put into a boat or railed to either near or distant markets.

SCARCITY OF 1874.

In 1874, when Bihar and other parts of Bengal suffered from famine, it was anticipated that the failure of the crops would cause great distress in Pābna. The rice harvests,

both *āus* and *āman*, were reported to have yielded only half an average crop, while the outturn of pulses was estimated at five-sixths of that of an ordinary year. Relief measures were organized by the local authorities under Government orders. Charitable aid, both in the shape of cooked and uncooked food, was given to those who were unable to work, advances were made to cultivators through their landlords, and relief works were opened to give employment to the able-bodied poor.

Although the distress in the district did not anywhere approach an actual famine, there were three months of scarcity during which the condition of the people was critical. In May 1874 many of the cultivators in the two most distressed thānas in the Sirājganj subdivision were living on insufficient food, and some of them were in an emaciated condition. Many of those who are ordinarily dependent on private charitable relief would also have probably died from starvation, had Government aid not been afforded. The recipients of relief consisted chiefiy of widows with families, sick labourers, old men without children, and others who in Bengal are in ordinary years supported by their neighbours.

During the latter half of the month of May 1874, the average price of common husked rice in the Rāiganj police circle was Rs. 5-5-4 per maund, and at one time the price rose to Rs. 6-10-8. Even wholesale purchases were made at Sirājganj at the rate of Rs. 4 per maund, and at Ullāpāra at Rs. 4-4. The average price of common husked rice in the Sadar subdivision during May 1874 was Rs. 3-1 per maund, and in the Sirājganj subdivision Rs. 3-9-2. Compared with present-day rates these prices are not alarming, but at that time the average price throughout the district in a good year during the same month was Re. 1-8-6 per maund, and in 1874 it was considered that the famine point was reached when rice sold in January for more than Rs. 4 per maund.

The total cost of the charitable relief given by or through Government in 1874 was Rs. 83,000; and the amount spent on roads and relief works was Rs. 28,000, making a total famine outlay of Rs. 1,11,000. In addition to this expenditure, Rs. 76,000 in money and grain was advanced to cultivators through their landlords, from whom security was taken for the repayment of the loans.

**FLOODS OF 1890.**

There were heavy floods in the Sadar subdivision in 1890. In the town of Pābna the southern portion of the civil and

criminal courts was flooded by the Ichhāmati, which had joined forces with the Padma, and many metalled and unmetalled roads were submerged and seriously damaged. Almost the whole of the town was more or less under water for nearly a month. After this, an embankment with sluice-gates was constructed along the right bank of the Ichhāmati to protect the town from further inundations.

LOODS OF 906.

In August 1906 there were serious floods which affected nearly the whole of the district, many villages being submerged and roads being breached. In the Sadar subdivision one-third to one-half of the *āus* crop had been harvested, but the rest of the crop was almost wholly destroyed; in the Sirājganj subdivision two-thirds of this crop had been reaped before the floods, but the greater part of the rice still on the ground was destroyed or seriously damaged.

YCLONE OF 864.

On 5th October 1864 Pābna was visited by a hurricane, which swept in from the Bay of Bengal accompanied by a storm wave, which along the Hooghly was an even more potent agent of destruction than the violence of the wind. The storm crossed the Ganges between Rāmpur-Boālia and Pābna, swept the whole length of the Bogra district, and curving to the eastward became expended in the Gāro Hills. It caused widespread destruction of houses and trees, and at Pābna many of the Government buildings were severely damaged.

YCLONE OF 872.

On the 20th September 1872 another severe cyclone swept over Pābna and lasted from 11 A.M. till nightfall. In this space of time it caused widespread destruction. In the town of Pābna about 20,000 fruit trees were blown down, and 5,000 houses and huts levelled to the ground. At Sirājganj the Subdivisional Officer's house was unroofed, every police building and Government office was blown down, and almost all the records were destroyed. The Mymensingh-Sirājganj mail-boat sank in the Jamuna; a steamer and two flats were driven high on the bank of the Hurāsāgar river; another steamer had the whole of its upper deck and both funnels blown away; over 100 large country boats were sunk; and serious injury was done to the crops.

ARTH-UAKES.

An earthquake in 1885 did considerable damage to masonry buildings, especially at Sirājganj. The earthquake which took place on 12th June 1897 was far more serious. At Sirājganj the upper storey of the subdivisional office, the jail and the post-office were wrecked. Almost every other masonry building was severely shaken or damaged. The gunny-bag factory

of Andrew Yule & Co. was shattered, and the Company removed its business. The site was sold and part of it was subsequently acquired for the railway station. In Pābna the Court houses and the other brick buildings were damaged; and in the interior fissures opened in the earth and many wells were choked with sand and silt.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AGRICULTURE.

GENERAL CONDITIONS.

AGRICULTURAL conditions differ in the two subdivisions, the difference being determined by their natural configuration. The Sirājganj subdivision consists mostly of low land traversed by many rivers and streams, the rise of which in the rains, combined with the spill water of the Jamuna, practically submerges the country. The annual inundation serves a double purpose, for it not only supplies the moisture necessary for the crops, and especially rice, but it renews the fertility of the soil by the deposition of silt. In the Sadar subdivision, on the other hand, the land is comparatively high, except in part of the Mathura thāna along the river Jamuna.

Soils.

The whole district consists of recent alluvium, suitable for a large variety of crops, but there are three main classes of land, viz., the high land, which is of a loamy texture, the *bil* land, which consists of a clay soil, and the *char* lands formed by the alluvial action of the rivers. Lands of the last class have a sandy soil or consist of a sandy loam according to their age, those of recent origin being almost pure sand ; *doāsh* is the name given to soil of which the composition is half sand.

Irrigation.

Owing to the copious rainfall and the annual flooding of the land by the rivers, artificial irrigation is unnecessary, the *rabi* lands retaining sufficient moisture and there being no want of water for the cold weather crops if there is timely winter rain. Irrigation from wells, tanks and streams is, however, resorted to for the cultivation of potatoes, which has been introduced recently ; water is scooped up by means either of the bamboo basket called *seuni* or of the *don*, a trough made out of the trunk of a palm-tree. Water from wells is raised by the bamboo lever working on an upright, called the *lāta*.

Manures.

Very little manure, if any, is necessary in the low lands as they are fertilized annually by the silt-laden floods, but as jute is a crop which responds to heavy manuring, sunn hemp is

This chapter has been compiled from notes kindly contributed by Babu Bhabatosh Dutta, Superintendent of Agriculture, Rājshahi Division, and Mr. G. Evans, C.I.E., Director of Agriculture, Bengal.

grown as a green manure on land devoted to its cultivation. The sunn hemp, which is raised in the winter season, is ploughed into the ground, which it enriches. In no other district except Mymensingh, where the cultivators have borrowed the practice from Pābna, is green manuring for the jute crop resorted to. High lands in the Sadar subdivision, on which sugarcane and jute are grown, are manured with any cowdung that can be spared, but this valuable manure is not available for ordinary use, for the people are dependent on it for fuel, the only other fuel in common use being dry jute sticks from which the fibre has been extracted.

Implements.

The agricultural implements are of the same simple kind as have been used from time immemorial, such as the wooden plough with a narrow tongue share, the wooden harrow (*bida*) country-made weeding forks (*khurpi*) and sickles. The three-rollered sugarcane mill and iron-pan manufactured by Renwick & Co. of Kushtia, in the Nadia district, have replaced the wooden roller and the earthenware pan (*hāndi*), but the last is still used for making molasses from the juice of the date-palm.

PRINCIPAL CROPS.

An unusually large proportion of the cultivated area bears two or even more crops; according to the returns of the Agricultural Department, the actual area which is cropped more than once is 666,000 acres. This feature in the agricultural economy of the district is of importance, for it is a security against scarcity, the cultivators not being so liable to suffer from the destruction of one crop by drought or heavy floods. The following is a statement of the normal area under different crops :—

| | | Acres. | Acres. |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Food-grains*— | | | |
| Rice. | *Aman* ... ... | 566,000 | |
| | *Aus* ... ... | 140,000 | |
| | *Boro* ... ... | 7,500 | |
| Total Rice | ... | | 713,500 |
| Wheat | ... ... | 16,000 | |
| Barley | ... ... | 16,000 | |
| Gram | ... ... | 20,000 | |
| Other food-grains including pulses. | | 124,000 | |
| | | | 176,000 |
| | Total food-grains ... | | 889,500 |

| | | Acres. | Acres. |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Oil seeds*— | | | |
| Linseed | ... ... | 7,600 | |
| *Til* | ... ... | 40,500 | |
| Rape and mustard | ... | 110,000 | |
| | | | 158,100 |
| Condiments and spices | ... ... | | 5,500 |
| *Crops grown for sugar*— | | | |
| Sugarcane | ... ... | 10,000 | |
| Other | ... ... | 900 | |
| | | | 10,900 |
| *Fibres*— | | | |
| Jute | ... ... | 126,000 | |
| Sunn hemp | ... ... | 29,000 | |
| | | | 155,000 |
| Tobacco | ... ... ... | | 7,000 |
| Fodder crops | ... ... | | 3,500 |
| Fruits and vegetables | ... ... | | 2,000 |
| *Miscellaneous*— | | | |
| Food | ... ... | 30,000 | |
| Non-food | ... ... | 9,500 | |
| | | | 39,500 |
| GRAND TOTAL | ... | | 1,271,000 |

Particulars of the times at which the different crops are sown and harvested, as well as of the seed-rate and yield per acre, are given in the statement below :—

| — | Seed time. | Seed-rate per acre. | Harvest time. | Yield per acre. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. *Aman*, long-stemmed, *Baran* in lowlands. | Broadcasted in April. | 30 srs. ... | Dec.-Jan. ... | 24 to 30 mds. of grain. |
| 2. *Aman*, upland, transplanted. | Seedbed May. Transplanted June-July. | 15 ,, ... | Ditto ... | Ditto. |
| 3. *Aus* in *char* lands ... | Broadcast in April. | 30 ,, ... | July ... ... | 18 to 20 mds. |
| 4. *Aus* in uplands ... | Broadcast in May. | 30 ,, ... | August ... | Ditto. |
| 5. *Boro, bil* ... ... | Seedbed January. Transplanted February. | 15 ,, ... | May ... ... | 24 to 30 mds. |
| 6. Barley ... ... | Oct.-Nov. ... | 30 ,, ... | March-April ... | 12 mds. |
| 7. Wheat ... ... | Ditto ... | 1 md. ... | Ditto ... | 10 to 12 mds. |

| — | Seed time. | Seed-rate per acre. | Harvest time. | Yield per acre. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. *Kaon* (Panicum Italicum). | April-May ... | 5 srs. ... | July-August ... | 6 mds. |
| 9. *Khesāri* (Lathyrus sativus). | Sept.-Oct. ... | ½ md. ... | Feb.-March ... | 8 ,, |
| 10. *Mūg* (Phaseolus mungo). | Ditto ... | 6 srs. ... | Dec.-Jan. ... | 6 ,, |
| 11. *Kalai* (Phaseolus aconitifolium). | Aug.-Oct. ... | 6 ,, ... | Ditto ... | 6 ,, |
| 12. Peas (Pisum arvense) | Oct.-Nov. ... | 10 ,, ... | Feb.-March ... | 6 ,, |
| 13. *Rahar* (Cajanus Indicus). | June-July ... | 6 ,, ... | March-April ... | 6 ,, |
| 14. Lentil (*Musuri*) (Ervum lens). | Oct.-Nov. ... | 12 ,, ... | Feb.-March ... | 6 ,, |
| 15. Gram (Cicer arietinum). | Ditto ... | 20 ,, ... | March ... ... | 6 ,, |
| 16. Rape and mustard (Brussica sph.). | Sept.-Oct. ... | 4½ ,, ... | Feb.-March ... | 4 to 6 mds. |
| 17. *Til* (Gingelly) (Sesamum Indicum). | January ... | 9 ,, ... | June ... ... | 6 mds. |
| 18. Linseed ... ... | Oct.-Nov. ... | 9 ,, ... | Feb.-March ... | 6 ,, |
| 19. Jute in low lands ... | March-April ... | 4½ ,, ... | June-Aug. ... | 15 to 20 mds. |
| 20. Jute in high lands ... | May ... ... | 4½ ,, ... | Aug.-Sept. ... | Ditto. |
| 21. Sunn hemp (Crotolaria juncea). | Oct.-Nov. ... | 30 ,, ... | Feb. ... ... | 6 mds. |
| 22. Tobacco ... ... | Seedbed Aug.-Sept. Transplanted Oct.-Nov. | 1 oz. ... | Feb.-March ... | 10 to 12 mds. |
| 23. Chillies ... ... | Seedbed May-June. Transplanted July-August. | ¾ sr. ... | Dec.-Feb. ... | 8 to 10 ,, |
| 24. Turmeric ... ... | May-June ... | 2 mds. of rihzomes. | Ditto ... | 50 mds. |
| 25. Coriander seed (Coriandrum sativum.) | Oct.-Nov. ... | 6 srs. ... | Feb.-March ... | 4½ ,, |
| 26. Ginger ... ... | May-June ... | 3 mds. of rhizomes. | Dec.-Feb. ... | 50 ,, |
| 27. Onions (grown from bulbs). | Oct.-Nov. ... | 1½ mds. of bulbs. | Feb.-March ... | 80 ,, |
| 28. Garlic ... ... | Ditto ... | Ditto ... | Ditto ... | 60 ,, |
| 29. Betel-leaf (*Pān*) ... | May-Nov. ... | 2,000 cuttings | Plucking of leaves begins 3 months after planting. | 50 to 80 lakhs of leaves. |
| 30. Betelnut (*Supārī*) (Areca Catechu) | Nuts sown in seedbed. Oct.-Nov. Transplanted two years after, in May-June. | 1,000 plants ... | 6 to 8 years after planting. Flowering season Feb.-March. Plucking season Nov. to Jan. | 6 to 8 mds. of nuts. |
| 31. Sugarcane ... ... | Jan.-Feb. ... | 12,000 cuttings | Dec.-March ... | 40 to 60 mds. of *gur*. |
| 32. Melons ... ... | Jan.-March ... | 1 to 2 seers ... | April-July ... | About Rs. 30 worth. |

Rice. Aman.

Rice is the staple crop of the district and furnishes the greater part of its food supply. The main crop consists of *āman* or winter rice, which is generally sown broadcast on the low-lands. Transplantation is confined to lands of higher elevation and is reported to be an innovation of recent date. The long stemmed variety, which is known locally as *baran*, is grown in places where water accumulates in the rains to a depth of 3 to 15 feet. It has the property of keeping pace in its growth with the rise of the water but the rise must be gradual; a sudden high rise may drown the plants or wash them away. As a rule, the lower the situation of the rice land, the coarser is the grain and the heavier the outturn. The finer varieties are confined to the Sadar subdivision.

Aus.

*Aus* rice, which requires land of a higher elevation, is mainly grown in the Sadar subdivision and is mostly of a coarse description. The plants grow to a height of about 3 or 3½ feet and land has consequently to be selected on which the depth of water at the beginning of the rains does not exceed two feet. *Aus* is sometimes grown in *char* lands mixed up with *āman*: in such cases it is sown early, so that it may be harvested before the rivers rise; when it is reaped, the *āman* is left standing in the fields.

Boro.

*Boro* rice, which is a spring or summer crop, is grown on the sides of *bils* and streams and also to some extent in the *chars*; it is sown in nurseries and transplanted to the soft mud left behind when the floods recede. It bears a coarse grain, but the outturn is large and the cost of cultivation is reduced by the fact that ploughing is not required for the fields.

Kaon.

*Kāon* (Panicum Italicum) occupies a place second to *āus* paddy among the *kharif* crops. It is grown at the same time as *āus* and on lands having a similar situation.

Jute.

Next to rice, jute is the crop of greatest economic importance in Pābna, for while the cultivator depends on the rice harvest for food, he looks to the sale-proceeds of his jute to pay his rent and buy his little comforts. The extensive cultivation of jute in the district is only about half a century old. Until 1865 the fibre was only grown on a very small scale for local use, and little or none was exported. The position was changed with the growing demand for the fibre in Europe, and cultivation expanded rapidly till in 1872 there were 123,000 acres under the crop. Since then the area under cultivation has fluctuated according to the demand and the rate of prices, but the normal cropped area is now 126,000 acres and the crop of 1920 had an outturn of 226,000 bales of 400 lbs. each.

The Sirājganj subdivision is famous for its jute, one variety of which is known in the commercial market as Sirājganj jute. The species grown here is *Corchorus capsularis*, the plant of which is suitable for low land as it is able to withstand water-logging; finer varieties are however grown at a slightly higher elevation. The jute mostly grown in the Sadar subdivision is of a different kind, viz., *Corchorus olitorius*, locally known as *tosha*, which cannot stand submersion. There is also a difference in the times of sowing. In the Sirājganj subdivision, as well as in the low lands of the Sadar subdivision, the crop is sown early to prevent its being swamped by floods, while *tosha* is sown on the higher lands of the latter subdivision not earlier than May. Mustard is the *rabi* crop which most commonly follows jute, as other *rabi* crops interfere with the early preparation of the soil for jute. In the Sirājganj subdivision however, where the land is green manured in the winter season with sun hemp, *rabi* crops are not grown. As already mentioned, the practice of green manuring the jute land in this way is peculiar to this subdivision and to Mymensingh.

The crop in the low lands is ready for cutting by the beginning of July and in the higher lands a month later. The crop is cut in three stages, viz., when the plants are in flower, when they are just setting and when the fruit is well developed. It takes the plants about four weeks to pass the three stages; cutting in the last stage gives a heavier yield and ensures a good quality of fibre. The plants are cut close to the ground unless the water is deep, in which case they are pulled up. After this they are tied in bundles and left in the water to ret. On high lands, however, the bundles are stacked on the fields for two or three days before being taken to the nearest water to steep, the bundles being covered with the tops of the plants or with weeds to protect them from the rays of the sun, which would impair the quality of the fibre. The bundles are placed one above the other in the water, the topmost layer being covered with weeds. Some cultivators put bamboo posts on either side of the heaps with another bamboo tied across them to keep the heaps of bundles submerged.

The process of retting takes 15 to 20 days. Deep stagnant water is preferred to shallow running water for the purpose. The disadvantage of shallow water is that the lowest bundles touch the ground, and this affects the colour of the fibre. Steeping in running water also takes a longer time and the outer bundles of the heap are not ready for the extraction of fibre when the inner bundles are, with the result that the fibre is not

uniform in quality. If however there is no alternative, the heaps are broken up and the outside bundles are kept steeping for a few days longer.

There are two methods of extracting the fibre. One is is to take the bundles, when retting is complete, to the home of the cultivator and strip off the fibre from each plant separately. The strippers are generally the womenfolk of the cultivator's family. Each stripper holds the lower portion of the stem in one hand, and deftly pulls off the fibre with the other; a skilled stripper can extract fibre from three or four plants at a time. Half a maund of dry fibre can ordinarily be extracted by one stripper. When a sufficient quantity has been extracted, it is taken to the water and washed properly. This method of extraction gives a better outturn as nothing is lost through entanglement and the fibre being free from tangles commands a higher price.

If the other method is followed, the cultivator stands in the water by the heap of jute, takes out a handful of the stems at a time, beats on the bottom of the stems with a flat wooden mallet and afterwards breaks the handful of stems at a distance of a cubit from the bottom; he then shakes out the loosened stems from the broken portion and taking hold of the separated fibre with both hands, gives a few jerks backward and forward to the unextracted stems; about half a dozen jerks clear the fibre off the stems. The fibre is then washed and rinsed and made into a twist and thrown out on the dry land or a boat near by. After washing, the fibre is dried in the sun over bamboo poles for two or three days and is made into bundles.

It is very seldom that a cultivator personally brings his produce for sale in the market or *hāt*. Itinerant traders called *phārias* go about from house-to-house buying up jute from the growers. The *phārias* sell their purchases to *bepāris* or traders, who in their turn dispose it to the *mahājans* (generally Marwaris), who store the jute in their godowns. Thence it either finds its way to the Calcutta market, mills or press-houses in drums and kutcha bales or goes to the local balers. A drum weighs 40 seers without any assortment; kutcha bales are generally made to a weight of 3½ maunds each, assorted and pressed at the *mahājans'* godowns. These kutcha bales are divided into the following qualities:—1's containing 80 per cent. to 90 per cent. of hessian warp; 2's containing 40 per cent. of hessian warp; 3's containing 60 per cent. of sacking warp; 4's containing 20 per cent. of sacking warp; and "rejections," which are all weft. The

standard quality of loose jute market is called 50—50, that is 50 per cent. of the bales contain 2's and 50 per cent. 3's. The price of this quality determines the prices of other qualities according to the demand of the market. The balers make the jute into bales of 5 maunds each by means of presses. The standard quality of baled jute is what is known in the market as "M" group or "cracks". They are made up in equal proportions of Nos. 2's and 3's packed separately. This "M" group forms the basis of transactions with foreign countries. It should be added that the European firms have their own godowns at Sirājganj and obtain their requirements through their own buying agencies at country marts.

There is another system of buying jute by which the cultivators, receive advances from the *mahājans* through their *bepāris* at the time of sowing. A rate is fixed, generally much below the market rate, at which the cultivator agrees to sell all his produce to the *mahājan* and also agrees to pay him one to two seers of jute for each rupee advanced. The cultivator thus gets tied hand and foot and if the crop fails or is short, he is faced with ruin.

The cost of the cultivation of jute in the district including the extraction of fibre ordinarily amounts to Rs. 80 and the average outturn to 16 maunds per acre.

The *rabi* crops of the district consist of mustard, *kalai* and *mug* (Phaseolus radiatus and P. Mungo), *khesāri* (Lathyrus sativus), the lentil known as *musuri*, *rahar* (Cajanus indicus), peas, wheat, barley and linseed. *Rabi* crops.

Mustard, which, as already stated, is generally grown after jute, is more extensively cultivated than any other *rabi* crop. *Kalai*, *mug* and peas are grown on *char* lands, where they are sown broadcast in October when the water subsides.

*Khesāri*, which yields a cheap pulse, is frequently grown for fodder, especially if there is a scarcity of grass owing to the failure of rain in the early part of the year.

Another crop of importance is *til* or gingelly, which is raised on newly formed *chars* where no other crop can be profitably grown. Gingelly.

Tobacco is a crop of minor importance. It is not a field crop, but is only raised on small plots of homestead land, the leaf being used for home consumption only. Tobacco.

The cultivation of sugarcane in the Sirājganj subdivision is precluded by the low level of the country. Elsewhere cultivators are frequently prevented from growing it by the Sugarcane.

ravages of wild pigs. It is however grown on the banks of the Ichhāmati in the Sadar subdivision and in the areas adjoining the Rājshāhi district. There are three local varieties, of which that known as *dhali*, is the best. This is a soft cane, whereas the other two have hard thin stems.

Date-palm sugar.

Pābna gets part of her supply of molasses (*gur*) from the juice of the date-palm, which is not regularly cultivated as in Jessore and Khulna, but grows spontaneously in large quantities, especially in the west of the Sadar subdivision. Tapping begins in October and lasts till March. The lower leaves of the terminal tuft of foliage are cut off on one side of the tree and the exposed surface is shaved. A cut is made in the shape of a shallow V about half an inch deep, at the end of which a small slip of bamboo is inserted. The sap or juice, which exudes, flows into this bamboo tube, which acts as a spout to carry the juice into a pot. The tapping continues for three days at a time, the cut being deepened each day, after which the tree has three days' rest; there are altogether 60 tappings in the season. The juice collected on the first day is called *jiran ras*. On the second day *dokāt* and on the third day *jharna*. The juice is boiled and made into cakes of *gur* or *patali*, each about half a seer in weight, which sell at the rate of two to five annas a seer. A tree yields on the average 5 seers of juice a day, or 300 seers in the season, and 10 seers of juice produce one seer of *gur*, so that the outturn of a tree in the season comes to 30 seers of *gur*.

Spices.

Turmeric is by far the most extensively cultivated of the spices. Next in importance is coriander seed. Chillies, ginger, areca nut and *pān* are also grown.

Turmeric is grown in the shade in mango groves, as well as in the open. The bulbs are planted in rows in the month of May; care has to be taken to prevent any accumulation of water as water-logging is very injurious to the crop. The rhizomes are taken up from December to January when the leaves have completely withered. They are boiled in water mixed with cowdung and are then spread out in the sun to dry. Drying takes three or four days, and every evening the rhizomes are rubbed with the hand to make them clean and smooth. The outturn is about 80 maunds of raw turmeric, or 20 maunds of dried turmeric per acre, and the cost of cultivation averages about Rs. 50 per acre.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.

The Sadar subdivision abounds in the ordinary fruits of the plains. Mangoes, jack fruit and plantains are plentiful; other

common fruits are the litchi, lemon, papaya, cocoanut, melons and the Indian blackberry or *jāmun* (Eugenia Jambolana). Country vegetables are grown in abundance, the surplus left after local consumption, being exported to the Calcutta market. The cultivation of potatoes has recently been started owing to the activities of the Agricultural Department, but other English vegetables, such as cabbages and cauliflowers, are not grown locally. The following statement gives details of the principal vegetables raised in Pābna :—

| Name. | Sowing time. | Time when ready. |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Brinjal (*Baigun*) ... ... ... ... | Seed bed :—May-June. Transplanted :—July-August. | October-March. |
| 2. *Patol* (Trichosanthes dioica) ... ... | September-October ... | March-September. |
| 3. Radish ... ... ... ... ... ... | August-November ... | September-February. |
| 4. Sweet potato (*Sakarkand*) ... ... ... | September-October ... | February-March. |
| 5. Country beans (*lablab*) ... ... ... | June-August ... ... | October-January. |
| 6. *Kachu* (Colocasia antiquorum) ... ... | May-June ... ... | August-September. |
| 7. Bottle gourd (*Lau*) ... ... ... ... | (1) January-February<br>(2) July-August ... | March-May.<br>October-January. |
| 8. Gourd (*Bilāti Kumra* or *Mitha Kumra*) ... | (1) March-April ...<br>(2) July-August ... | June-July.<br>October-January. |
| 9. Pumpkin ... ... ... ... ... ... | April-May ... ... | July-October. |
| 10. *Jhinga* (Luffa acutangula) ... ... ... | (1) March-April ...<br>(2) May-July ... ... | July-September.<br>August-November. |
| 11. *Dhundul* (Luffa Egyptiaca) ... ... ... | April-June ... ... | July-September. |
| 12. Bitter gourd (*Karala*) ... ... ... | February-March ... | April-August. |
| 13. Bitter gourd, small (*Uchchhe*) ... ... | December-January ... | March-July. |
| 14. Lady's finger (Hibicus esculentus) ... | May-August ... ... | August-December. |
| 15. *Kankrol* (Momordica Cochin-Chinensis) ... | April-May ... ... | August-September. |
| 16. Indian horse-radish (*Sajna*) ... ... ... | April ... ... .. | Pods ready by January-April in the 2nd year. |
| 17. Snake gourd (*Chinchinga*) ... ... ... | May-June ... ... | August-September. |
| 18. Yam (*Khamalu*) ... ... ... ... | April-May (raised from tuber cuttings). | December-January. |
| 19. Cucumber ... ... ... ... ... | (1) December-January<br>(2) June-July ... ... | May-August.<br>September-December. |
| 20. Plantain (*Kanch-Kala*) ... ... ... | Suckers planted June-August. | 1 year after planting. |
| 21. Potato ... ... ... ... ... ... | October-November ... | January-March. |
| 22. Potherbs (*Sāg*)—different varieties such as *Bethu* (Chenopodium viride), *Notia* (Amaranthus Sp.), *Puin* (Basella alba and rubra) and *Palám* (Beta bengalensis). | | |

CATTLE AND PASTURAGE.

According to a census taken in 1920 the district contains 36,442 bulls, 201,234 bullocks and 214,658 cows, besides young stock aggregating 175,180. The number of buffaloes enumerated was—male 12,363, female 2,608, and young stock 621. Pābna is said to have been famous for the abundance of its milch cattle and has still pride of place among the districts of the Rājshāhi Division for *ghī* and other dairy products. The quality and number of the cattle have been impaired by the reduction of grazing grounds owing to the spread of cultivation and the erosion caused by the rivers Jamuna and Padma, and also by lack of knowledge in the breeding and selection of cattle. The cattle depend for food on paddy straw and the grass they pick up in grazing. Grasses are also cut from the *bils* and *chars* and brought to market for sale; the chief varieties are *dūb* (Cynodon dactylon), *makra* (Ebasine aegyptiaca), *khas* (Andropogon muricatus) and *takri* (Panicum sanguinale).

RECENT AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENTS.

The following account of the agricultural improvements recently effected by the Agricultural Department has been contributed by Mr. G. Evans, C.I.E., Director of Agriculture, Bengal.

As has been explained above, the district really consists of two distinct areas, one of which (the eastern portion) closely resembles the typical low-lying Eastern Bengal country and the other more closely resembles the high-lying tract of the Presidency Division. A good deal of experimental work in the former class of land has been carried on for years past in the Dacca Division and the Agricultural Department has been able to suggest improvements. In the western area, however, the need for a small experimental farm was very soon evident, as the conditions are quite different. A district farm of about 20 acres was accordingly established on a typical piece of high land near the Sadar headquarters in 1920-21: the land was acquired by the District Board, which made it over to the department. The object was to test new varieties of the main crops against local varieties and to confirm the results of special manures under the special conditions that obtain locally. The farm is now in its second year of working and already some very good results have been obtained, of which a few examples may be mentioned briefly.

Pābna is an important sugarcane growing tract and the departmental variety known as yellow Tanna was tested

side by side with the most popular local variety (*dhali*). The Tanna cane yielded 101 maunds of *gur* per acre against 46 maunds of the local variety grown side by side under exactly equal conditions. The result has naturally been to create a very strong demand for setts of this variety, and to meet this demand a number of privately owned Tanna cane seed farms have been established. There seems little doubt that this new cane will in a very short time completely oast the local varieties, as it not only has a heavier yield, but it is harder and not so liable to damage from jackals or attacks of stem boar and is also more resistant to the fungus disease known as red rot.

With regard to jute, in the low-lying eastern area, white jute (C. Capsulariles) is grown, and here the departmental jutes known as Kakai Bombai and R85, a derivative from it, have become as firmly established as they have in the Dacca Division. These new jutes are late flowering and withstand drought in the early stages and water-logging later on, and numerous tests have proved that they yield at least one maund of fibre more to the *bigha* than local jute. The limiting factor at present is solely the supply of sufficient seed, which presents difficulties and is engaging the serious attention of the Agricultural Department in Bengal.

On the western highland part of the district the *tosha* variety (C. Olitorius) is grown. In this case the new jute now called Chinsurah Green, which is perhaps the most remarkable variety yet raised by the Fibre Expert, was tested against the local *tosha* on a series of plots on the farm. The average yields (of cleaned fibre) in 1921 worked out as follows per acre :—Chinsurah Green 14 maunds 29 seers, and local *tosha* 11 maunds 26 seers, giving an increased production of 3 maunds 3 seers per acre for the Chinsurah Green, the fibre of which was also of much better quality. Here again the demand for seed is very great and an effort has been made to get the local zamīndārs to grow seed to meet it.

As regards paddies, the Economic Botanist's variety of *āman* known as *Indrasail*, when tested in 1921 on the farm against the local variety (*Mailsora*), yielded 16½ maunds against 6½ maunds, and the *aus* variety called *Kataktāra* is also likely to do well on the highland area. A new crop in the shape of potatoes is being introduced and seed imported regularly from Darjeeling. As a result of successful demonstration, a strong demand has also sprung up for castor-cake as a manure for sugarcane.

It can readily be imagined that this promising state of affairs has entailed a great deal of work on the small agricultural staff, which consists of a District Agricultural Officer and five demonstrators. In order to meet the increased work, a separate agricultural officer has now been deputed to Sirājganj subdivision, and it is hoped to strengthen the staff of demonstrators. It has been recognised, however, that unofficial aid will have to come to the help of the departmental officers if the good progress which has been made is to be continued. To this end a movement has been initiated in the way of forming co-operative agricultural associations. Six of these village associations have so far been organised and have been registered under the Co-operative Societies Act. They raise their own share capital and their main object is the raising of seed of these new varieties of crops and the purchase and sale of the seed and of special manures, such as castor-cake, to their own members and also to outsiders. The progress of the associations is being carefully watched, and if they succeed they should do a great deal towards rapidly and efficiently introducing agricultural improvements in the district.

## CHAPTER VII.

### INDUSTRIES, LABOUR AND TRADE.

FACTORY INDUSTRIES. Jute presses.

THE pressing of jute into bales is an important industry in Pābna, there being thirty concerns engaged in the business. Altogether the number of men employed is 2,100, the average labour force in the different concerns varying from 10 to 375. The principal jute presses are those of David & Co., at Sirājganj, of Landale & Clark, Ltd., at Bera and of Mānikchand Sethia at Sirājganj. The presses at Sirājganj work for the most part with imported labour and those at Bera with local labour. The strength of the labour force varies largely according to the season, rising to 500, for instance, in the largest concern during the busy season, July to December, and falling to below 100 during the slack season, January to June.

Hosiery.

The manufacture of hosiery is an industry of recent growth, which has with good prospects before it. There are two hosiery factories at Pābna, one known as the Pābna Hosiery Co. and the other as the Pābna Shilpa Sanjibani Co., Ltd. The Pābna Hosiery Co. is a private concern owned by the Tāntibānd zamīndārs. The Pābna Shilpa Sanjibani Co. is a limited liability company with a registered capital of 2 lakhs : Rs. 75,000 has been paid up in 750 shares of Rs. 100 each. A third hosiery factory, known as the Banga Bijay Factory, was started at Sirājganj in 1920 by a private firm owned by Babus Sashi Bhushan Sarkār and Kanai Bihāri Sarkār of the Bogra district.

The largest and most important concern is that of the Pābna Shilpa Sanjibani Co., which was started in 1905 and has been very successful, paying dividends of 15 per cent. in 1918, of 35 per cent. in 1919 and of 25 per cent. in 1920. Its annual outturn is reported to be 7,000 dozen vests (banians), 300 dozen socks and 100 dozen sweaters. The factory exports its products to most places in Bengal and at present is unable to cope with the demand. The total number of men employed is about 70 and almost all the machines are driven by steam power. The outturn of the Pābna Hosiery Co. is about 10 dozen vests a day : it employs about 20 men and almost all the machines are driven by oil engines.

Other factories.

There are two ice-making factories in the district, one at Sirājganj employing about 10 men and the other at Sāra, employing about 75 men. They work from April to November, and the ice is mostly used for preserving fish sent to Calcutta. There are two printing presses at Pābna and the third at Sirājganj, which meet local demands. There are also two machines for the manufacture of aerated water—one at Pābna and one at Sirājganj. The aerated water manufactured locally is, however, not in much demand, people getting soda water made at Nārāyanganj, Goalundo and Calcutta.

VILLAGE INDUSTRIES. Cloth-weaving.

The weaving of cotton cloths on hand-looms is an old industry in Pābna which has survived the competition of the European and Bombay mills and is still the most important cottage industry in the district. The Pābna fabrics have a high reputation on account of their fine texture, and it is claimed that they challenge comparison with the products of Dacca and other historic seats of the weaving industry.

It is estimated that there are 9,500 looms in the district, of which 3,000 are fly-shuttle looms, and that the outturn of cloth is 7,500,000 yards a year. Six weavers' co-operative societies, with nearly 100 members, have been formed. The Director of Industries reports that the principal centres of the industry, with the number of looms working in each, are as follows :—

| Village. | No. of looms. | Village. | No. of looms. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Delua ... | 1,700 | Sadullapur ... | 300 |
| Dhuparia ... | 600 | Enayatpur ... | 255 |
| Randhunibāri | 500 | Rāghabpur ... | 250 |
| Tamai ... | 500 | Bagdi ... | 220 |
| Sohāgpur ... | 500 | Ekdanta ... | 200 |
| Puchlia ... | 400 | Chalua ... | 200 |
| Sibpur ... | 360 | Bejgāthi ... | 200 |
| Ruknai ... | 300 | Amīnpur ... | 150 |

Other weaving villages are :—

SIRAJGANJ SUBDIVISION.

(i) Ajugarha, Gopālpur, Mānikpur and Sachhupur in Belkuchi police-station.

(ii) Chotadhul, and Basantapur in Chauhāli police-station.

SADAR SUBDIVISION.

(i) Mānikdia in Sujānagar police-station.

(ii) Gopālpur in Atgharia.

(iii) Masundia in Bera.

(iv) Chithalia, Nishchintapur and Sibrāmpur in Pābna.

(v) Daripāra, Mulgrām, Haripur, Singail, Pailanpur, Briguakhora, Jagannāthpur, Bathor and Baludiar in Chātmohar.

Fine cloths are made at Sadullapur, Nishchintapur and Amīnpur in the Sadar subdivision and at Delua, Gāchhapur and Chotadhul in the Sirājganj subdivision. The *chhadars* and cloth made at Delua are of a specially fine quality and in good demand among the upper classes. The industry is confined to Muhammadan Jolahas and a few Hindu Tāntis near Pābna. The thread or yarn is mainly English : Japanese yarn is used to a small extent. It is obtained from Calcutta through middlemen, from whom the weavers purchase it on credit paying a high interest. The centres of the trade in local cloths are :—

(a) Delmar Hāt (Belkuchi), Sohāgpur, Shāhzādpur, Koijuri, Ajugaza in the Sirājganj subdivision, and

(b) Mathura, Ekdanta, Sujānagar, Bangrām, Dhulauri, Kāsināthpur, Singail, Pailanpur, Bhānguria and Demra in the Sadar subdivision.

Dyeing of yarn in red and blue colours is carried on to a small estent and there is a small dye-house at Dogāchi near Pābna: indigo dye is mostly used.

Basket-making.

Baskets (*dhamas*) are made extensively in the district by a class known as Betua Muchis and are exported mainly to Rājshāhi and Calcutta. They are round in shape and made of local cane. They are of various sizes to hold 4 to 20 kacha seers of grain and are sold at annas 4 to annas 12 each according to quality and size.

Blanket-making.

Blankets are made at Sāra by some families who migrated there from Bihar. The blankets are rough but of good quality. The shepherds rear sheep and weave the blankets from their wool.

Brick and tile-making.

Bricks and tiles are manufactured in the indigenous kilns (*pājas*) and also in Bull's patent kilns. In the former local labour is employed ; for the latter moulders and *mistris* are imported from Bihar.

Pottery.

The ordinary earthen pots of daily use are made by local potters, but they are of inferior quality and brittle and do not last long. They are unable to make big jars (*jālas* and *kolas*) and tubs (*charis*). These are made by potters who come from Nadia in the dry season and also make rings for wells. Earthen toys are made at Nauhatta and Santhiantoli.

Hide-curing and shoe-making.

Hides are cured by local butchers and Muchis (known as Rishis), who work for Muhammadan hide dealers on a system of advances. Hide-dealers come from Dacca, settle down near some railway station, purchase raw hides and get them cured by Muchis or Musalmān hide curers from Dacca, who are called Khālifas or Kārigārs.

Shoe-making is practically a monopoly of Chamārs from upcountry (Chapra, Arrah, Ghāzipur, Ballia, Gorakhpur and Unao), some of whom have settled in the towns and larger bazars while others remain for part of the year. They sell to order and also go to the different bazars, where they sell direct to the villagers.

Pearl-fishing.

A minute industry, of interest on account of its rarity, is that of pearl-fishing, which is carried on from the middle of February. The pearls are obtained from fresh water shells in the *bils* of thānas Chātmohar, Ullāpāra and Shāhzādpur : they are of small size and are sold for about Rs. 60 each to purchasers from Calcutta and Bogra. Those who engage in the industry are Bāgdis and other low castes of Dahakula, Bhattakāg and Santala (Ullāpāra), Gopālnagar and Idilpur (Chātmohar) and Parkola (Shāhzādpur).

Rope, string and bag-making.

Rope and string are made for boating purposes by Jalia Kaibarttas along the banks of the Padma and Jamuna from jute and hemp (of a poor quality) and also from cocoanut coir. Ropes of a special kind for towing boats, which are called *gun*, are made from hemp or flax of a good quality. The thick two-ply string, called *taita*, which is used for thatching and repairing roofs, is also a common cottage industry among the poorer Muhammadans of the labouring classes. Single-ply twine is made from hemp by poor Kapāli women who supply a twine factory at Sirājganj, where it is made into three-ply twine. This factory, which is a small concern employing 4 to 6 persons, supplies the orders of the Comptroller of Stamps and Stationery. The outturn varies from 125 to 200 maunds ; in 1920 it was 125 maunds, besides 1,000 balls of twine balls of 4 oz. each. Kapāli women also make bags or sacks from jute string and one of their specialities is the money bags commonly used by Indian tradesmen.

Oil-pressing.

The extraction of oil from mustard seed is an industry confined to the Muhammadan Kalus and a few Hindu Telis, who use the indigenous oil press called *ghani*. The oil-cake is generally used for feeding cattle and supplies the local demand only.

There is a smithy in almost every *hāt* and bazar, the blacksmiths being mostly engaged in making the agricultural and other implements in common use, such as sickles, *kodālis*, plough-shares, *dāos* and axes; the more skilled make carpenters' tools, knives, razors and scissors. The betelnut cutters and *dāos* of Sutanāra in the Kāzipur police-station have a special reputation. Ironwork.

The cultivation and manufacture of indigo were carried on extensively throughout the district until 1860, and in some parts of the district it was hardly possible to travel four or five miles in any direction without passing an indigo factory. The revenue survey map (1851-52) shows 80 indigo factories and outworks, all situated near rivers or channels, but there were none in the north-west of the district. In 1860 there were 13 in existence as shown in the margin. The factories have long since ceased to work. The persistent opposition of the cultivators and labourers of the district rendered it impossible to carry on the industry and the factory owners were compelled to wind up their concerns. Many of the buildings have fallen into complete ruin. Indigo.

1. Atasubha.
2. Badai.
3. Dashuria-Munshidpur.
4. Dobrakol.
5. Dulaori.
6. Komidpur.
7. Kunabāri.
8. Kundaria.
9. Mājhipāra.
10. Nāzirganj.
11. Ratanpur.
12. Sirājganj.
13. Yakubpur.

Agricultural labour is generally local and the labourers consist mainly of Muhammadans. Hired labour is employed chiefly for weeding and harvesting. It is used only to a small extent for ploughing owing to the prevalence of the practice of exchanging labour, which is much in vogue among smaller cultivators. A man, for instance, who has cattle but does not wish to plough himself lends his cattle to another man for one day, and the latter in return ploughs his land for three days. Again, those who have insufficient land of their own work temporarily for cultivators with large holdings. A very few labourers are farm hands drawing yearly wages of Rs. 60 to Rs. 84 with food and clothing, *i.e.*, two pairs of *dhutis* and a pair of *gāmchas*. Labour is almost universally hired and the rate of wages varies with the season and the demand. The minimum is three to four annas a day with food; the rate is as high as eight annas to one rupee for weeding and harvesting. Wages are also paid in kind; a common rate of remuneration is one-fifth of the crop reaped, threshed and winnowed: in the riparian villages, the payment for reaping paddy is often only one-tenth of the crop. LABOUR.

In the villages on the banks of the Jamuna river one-fifth to one-tenth of the hired labour is imported from the

Dacca district. This appears chiefly to be due to cultivators who have lost their lands and have been driven across the river by heavy diluvion coming back to work near their old homes. Another exception to the general rule is a group of villages on the border of thānas Pābna and Sujānagar, where one-tenth of the hired labour is imported from the Kushtia subdivision of Nadia. These two blocks which import labour also, however, send labourers to other districts, chiefly to Mymensingh and Bogra, and to a lesser extent to Farīdpur and Bakarganj. On the borders of Rājshāhi landless labourers and cultivators with small holdings migrate to the Nātor subdivision during the harvesting season. In the south-west of the district towards Sāra and Ishurdi a certain proportion of the labourers consist of men who have come from the Nadia district and settled there. Along the river Jamuna also, near Bera Nakālia, there are a number of landless labourers, originally cultivators, whose land has been swept away by erosion. Being now dependent on manual labour they are employed in the jute presses and are also ready to do earthwork. The labourers in the vicinity of Sirājganj are more independent and consider it an indignity to engage in earthwork. There is no such prejudice in the Sadar subdivision, where local labour is usually employed for digging tanks and for the construction and repairs of roads. About 1,000 men in the neighbourhood of Sirājganj migrate annually and work in the jute mills near Calcutta for four to six months. A certain proportion of needy agriculturists also go across the river to Assam for cutting paddy and thatching grass.

Foreign labour comes from neighbouring districts for agricultural work, *e.g.*, Muhammadan labourers come from Nadia to the south of the district for weeding and reaping, and from outside the province for other works involving hard labour and physical strength, such as earthwork and baling jute. Labourers from Bihar and the United Provinces are imported for all large construction works, for which local labour is inadequate, and are also employed in the jute presses at Sirājganj. There they are the only men able to carry drums of jute on their heads: the Bengali, who is accustomed to carry weights on his neck and shoulders, is incapable of doing so.

TRADE. Geographically the district is favourably situated for trade, as picturesquely explained by Sir William Hunter in 1876 :—

"Lying at the point of the angle formed by the convergence of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, it commands the two river highways of Eastern India. Its marts, often of mushroom

growth, have become centres for collecting and re-distributing the exports of rich provinces; and the Sirājganj merchants transact, on an arid sandbank, half the jute trade of Bengal."

The jute trade is no longer concentrated in Sirājganj to this extent and has become widely disseminated, but the town is still one of the most important centres of the trade. Several jute firms have agencies there, quantities of loose jute are brought from Rangpur, Mymensingh and Bogra, as well as from the district, and the raw material is baled in the local presses for export *viâ* Calcutta. The other chief centres of trade are Pābna, Bera, Dhapari on the Padma, Pangāsi on the Ichhāmati and Ullāpāra on the Hurāsāgar. These places focus the agricultural produce of Pābna for export to Calcutta and elsewhere, and they distribute the imports of salt, piece-goods, kerosine oil and manufactured articles.

Trade in jute.

Sirājganj is, next to Nārāyanganj in the Dacca district, the most important district market for jute in Bengal. The following account of its trade is given in N. C. Chaudhury's *Jute in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1921) :—

"In the beginning of the season (*i.e.*, July), local jute called Deswāl is imported here. It is a medium fibre, neither very fine nor thick, of both white and blackish colours and but little rooty. As the season advances, jute from the other side of the river Jamuna—Pānibāri, Sarishabāri, Porabāri, etc.—comes in. This quality of jute, which is different from the local lowland jute, is very good in colour, strength and fine texture, yielding 50 to 70 per cent. hessian. Afterwards, jute from Bogra and the southern part of Rangpur is imported. From October, Deswāl and Mymensingh qualities are getting rare, while the market is mainly supplied with the jute of the parts of Northern Bengal, Assam and Cooch Behar carried by boats.

"The northern jute is generally of very good quality, although without any particular colour. It is soft and bears more twist. The jute grown by the river Teesta (a tributary to the Brahmaputra) is strong and fine. A limited quantity of *C. olitorius* called Tosha jute is also available at Sirājganj. For convenience of communications, jute is sold at Sirājganj throughout the year. In importance as a jute market, Sirājganj occupies the second position next to Nārāyanganj."

Centres of export.

Jute is exported mainly from Sirājganj, Ullāpāra, Bhāngura, Ishurdi, Sāra, Nāzirganj, Sātbaria, Sāgarkandi, Nakālia and Bera to Calcutta. Cereals, *e.g.*, gram, peas, *khesāri*, etc., as well as mustard, are exported to Bogra and Mymensingh mainly from Ullāpāra, Sirājganj, Ishurdi, Sāra, Sātbaria, Nakālia and Bera.

Tamarind fruit is exported to a certain extent to Calcutta, Mymensingh and Dacca, Jamtail being the principal exporting centre. Middlemen are said to make large profits over this business buying at 12 annas per maund and selling at Rs. 3 per maund. Ghee is exported mainly to Calcutta from Khāmārullāpāra (Belkuchi police-station), Ballopāra (Ullāpāra p.-s.) Shāhzādpur, Potājia, Pānjana, Jāmirta (Shāhzādpur p.-s.), Bhāngura (Faridpur p.-s.), Chātmohar, Ishurdi (Sāra p.-s.) and Bharenga (Bera p.-s.). Fowls and ducks and their eggs are exported to Calcutta from almost every station on the Sāra-Sirājganj Railway. The trade is especially brisk at Salap, where 3 or 4 big boxes of eggs are despatched daily. Eggs are collected by middlemen from door-to-door and at the *hāts* at 3 to 5 annas a dozen, and fetch double in Calcutta. Owing to this trade it is difficult to procure fowls and eggs in places near the railway stations. Fowls are also exported to Calcutta from Sujānagar *viâ* Pāngsa railway station. Fish caught in the *bils* in Kāzipur, Farīdpur, Tārās and Chātmohar police-stations are exported to Calcutta from Sirājganj and from Bhāngura and Saratnagar railway stations. Those caught in the Jamuna are exported to Calcutta from Sthāl by steamer. *Hilsa* fish caught in the Padma are exported by railway from Sāra and from Sāgarkāndi and Nāzirganj *viâ* Belgāchi railway station. Dried fish is exported from Fadai (Sujānagar police-station) to Calcutta.

Goats and sheep are brought to *hāts*, especially at Ratankandi, in quantities of a few hundred by *bepāris* and in lesser quantities of thirties and forties to *hāts* in Chauhāli police-station and sent off to Calcutta. Chauhāli, Tālgāch (Shāhzādpur p.-s.) and Arankhola do a considerable trade during the cold weather in cattle, which are mainly exported to Dacca and Mymensingh. Bones are collected all over the district by Muchis and butchers, mostly in Kāzipur p.-s. and Sāra p.-s., and exported to Messrs. Ralli Brothers at Calcutta. Hides are also collected by the same class, and exported to Calcutta through middlemen from Kālia Khāndapāra (Sirājganj), Shāhzādpur, Char Kawak (Ullāpāra p.-s.), Dāshsiki (Kāmārkhānda p.-s.), Bhānguria (Faridpur p.-s.), Ishurdi, Chandia, Ekdanta, Nārāyn Sibpur and Debottar (Atgharia p.-s.), Sātbāria (Sujānagar) and Aralia (Bera p.-s.).

Twine is exported to Calcutta from Sirājganj ; onions from Jorpukhuria (Sujānagar p.-s.) to Bhairab, turmeric from Chinakhora and Daskhin Birāmpur (Sujānagar p.-s.) to Dacca and Mymensingh, and molasses from Ahmadpur and Sujānagar to Dacca and Mymensingh. Cane baskets are exported from

Chandra, Ekdanta, Atgharia, Debottar (Atgharia p.-s.) and Pābna to Calcutta and Rājshāhi. The vegetables known as *patol* are sent from Pābna to Dacca and Mymensingh, and earthen pots (*surāhi*) are despatched by rail from Ishurdi to Calcutta and other places on the line, *e.g.*, Nātor, Sāntahār and Dinājpur.

The export trade is in the hands of middlemen, of whom there are three classes. The man who deals directly with the producer (or in the case of fish with the fishermen) is the *phāria*, a man of small capital who goes about from place-to-place collecting the articles for which there is a demand. These the *phārias* sell to the middlemen next in the order of gradation, viz., the *bepāris* who are established at the principal markets. The *bepāris* sell again to merchants according to the state of the market, *e.g.*, they may store the goods if prices are low and wait for a rise. Needless to say, the middlemen make large profits and the price received by the producer may be only half that paid by the consumer; thus, the cultivator may get Rs. 5 a maund for jute which fetches Rs. 10 in the market. Trade in articles of constant demand is generally run on a system of advances (*dādan*); the *bepāris* make advances to the *phārias*, who are bound in return to sell the commodities they collect only to the *bepāris* and often have their margin of profit limited. Calcutta merchants again finance collecting agents in a similar way. Middlemen

It is reported that there are altogether 80 permanent market places with a daily bazar for the sale of local produce, 215 *hāts* or temporary markets, which are usually held twice a week, and 58 periodical *melās* or fairs. Markets.

The following is a list of bazars and trade centres (indicating briefly the principal articles of trade) in each thāna of the district :— Bazars.

SADAR SUBDIVISION.

| List of bazars. | Trade centres. | Articles of trade. |
|---|---|---|
| *Pābna police-station—* | | |
| Pābna ... | Pābna Bazar ... | Paddy, rice, fish, vegetables and other necessaries of life. |
| Dogāchi ... | ...... | ...... |
| Bhaurāra ... | ...... | ...... |
| Sādiar ... | ...... | ...... |
| Ekdanta ... | ...... | ...... |
| Mālanchi ... | ...... | ...... |

| List of bazars. | Trade centres. | Articles of trade. |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Farīdpur police-station.—* | | |
| Faridpur ... | Pābna Bazar ... | Paddy, rice, fish, vegetables and other necessaries of life. |
| Gopālnagar ... | ...... | ...... |
| *Sujanagar police-station —* | | |
| Sujānagar ... | Sujanagar ... | Jute, paddy, rice, fish, etc., mainly. |
| Sātbāria ... | Sātbāria ... | ...... |
| Nāzirganj ... | ...... | ...... |
| Dulai ... | ...... | ...... |
| *Mathura police-station—* | | |
| Bera ... | Bera ... | Jute, paddy, molasses, wood, etc. |
| *Chātmohar police-station—* | | |
| Chātmohar ... | Chātmohar ... | Jute, paddy, rice. |
| Bhāngura ... | ...... | ...... |
| *Sāra police-station—* | | |
| Sāra Rāja Bazar ... | Sāra .. | Fish, vegetables, paddy, rice. |
| Kāmārpur Ganga Bazar. | ...... | *id.* |
| Pāksi Bazār ... | Pāksi ... | *id.* |
| *Sāinthia police-station—* | | |
| Sāinthia ... | Sāinthia (Dulai) ... | Fish, vegetables, paddy, rice. |
| Baugrām ... | ...... | ...... |

| List of bazars. | Trade centres. | Articles of trade. |
|---|---|---|
| | SIRAJGANJ SUBDIVISION | |
| *Sirājganj police-station—* | | |
| Kolbandar ... | Kolbandar ... | Jute, rice, paddy, kerosine, salt and other food-grains. |
| Kālibāri (Sirājganj) | Siālkol Hāt ... | Jute, paddy, rice. |
| Monohāripatti ... | Kālia-Kāndhāpāra ... | Cattle market. |
| Saidābād ... | ...... | ...... |
| Sātiāntoli ... | Bayrāhāt ... | Cattle and jute. |
| Gārudaha ... | Bāgbāri Hāt ... | Cattle, jute, paddy, rice. |
| Songācha ... | ...... | ...... |
| Bāgbāri ... | ...... | ...... |
| *Tārās police-station—* | | |
| Tārās ... | Tārās ... | Paddy, rice, fish. |
| *Belkuchi police-station—* | | |
| Delua ... | Delua Bazar ... | Jute, paddy, rice and other necessaries of life. |
| Makimpur ... | ...... | ...... |
| Balarāmpur ... | ...... | ...... |
| Khāmar Ullāpāra ... | ...... | ...... |
| Kāndhāpāra ... | ...... | ...... |
| Kalyānpur ... | ...... | ...... |
| *Chauhāli police-station—* | | |
| Chauhāli ... | Chauhāli ... | Jute, paddy, cattle, fish and other necessaries. |
| Kāndhāpāra ... | ...... | ...... |
| Betail ... | ...... | ...... |
| Chāndpur ... | ...... | ...... |
| Ullāpāra ... | ...... | ...... |
| *Kāmārkhānda police-station—* | | |
| Jhanāil ... | Kāmārkhanda ... | Jute, paddy, rice, fish. |
| Bhadraghāt ... | Porābāri ... | ...... |
| ...... | Dasshika ... | ...... |

| List of bazars. | Trade centres. | Articles of trade. |
|---|---|---|
| *Ullāpāra police-station—* | | |
| Ullāpāra ... | Ullāpāra ... | ...... |
| ...... | Kāliganj ... | Jute, hemp. |
| ...... | Barohar ... | ...... |
| *Rāiganj police-station—* | | |
| Chandāikona ... | Chandāikona ... | Paddy, rice, jute mainly. |
| Dhāngara ... | Dhāngara ... | ...... |
| Rāiganj ... | Nalka ... | ...... |
| Bhaiagānti ... | Shalanga ... | ...... |
| Ghurka ... | ...... | ...... |
| Deobhāg .. | ...... | ...... |
| Nimgāchi ... | ...... | ...... |
| Dhāmainagar ... | ...... | ...... |
| Dhubil ... | ...... | ...... |
| Shalanga ... | ...... | ...... |
| Sāhebganj ... | ...... | ...... |
| Nalka ... | ...... | ...... |
| Grām Pāngāsi ... | ...... | ...... |
| Hāt Pāngasi ... | ...... | ...... |
| Hāshil ... | ...... | ...... |
| Karilābāri ... | ...... | ...... |
| Brahmāgācha ... | ...... | ...... |
| Sātāni ... | ...... | ...... |
| Atgharia ... | ...... | ...... |
| *Shāhzādpur police-station.* | | |
| Shāhzādpur ... | Shāhzādpur ... | ...... |
| Jāmirta ... | Jāmirta ... ... | Paddy, rice and jute. |
| Porjana ... ... | Porjana ... ... | Paddy, rice and jute. |
| Beltail ... ... | Beltail ... ... | Paddy, rice and jute. |
| Potājia ... ... | Potājia ... ... | Paddy, rice and jute. |
| Sonātani ... | ...... | |
| Gārādaha ... | ...... | |
| Nārina ... ... | ...... | |

*Hāts.*

A large amount of trade is also carried on at village *hāts* or markets, which are held on fixed days, once or twice or

thrice a week. The *hāt* is usually held in an open space, where vendors from the neighbouring villages and petty traders from a distance sell their goods. They either sit on the ground with their wares set out before them, or occupy open sheds or booths with corrugated iron or thatched roofs. Business is transacted in all kinds of country produce, *e.g.*, rice, vegetables, spices, betel, tobacco, fruit, fish and earthenware. The villager disposes of his surplus produce and obtains what he needs himself. The more important *hāts* are also frequented by the brokers of merchants dealing in country produce. These markets belong to the zamīndārs, who charge the vendors fees for the right to sell their goods.

No large trade is carried on at the *melās* or fairs and there is no special feature in the business done, except that various kinds of wooden articles are sold at the *melās* held at Sonāmukhi in the Kāzipur police-station of the Sirājganj subdivision and at Shāhzādpur and Arankhola, where ponies and cattle are sold. Otherwise the ordinary commodities of daily use which are sold in *hāts* and bazars change hands, *e.g.*, sweetmeats, spices, pots and other utensils, fruits, trinkets, etc. The following is a brief account of the chief *melās* :— *Melās.*

A *melā* is held at Chandra in Atgharia police-station on the occasion of Kārtik Puja and lasts for about a month. Some 500 to 600 persons from villages in the vicinity attend it and shopkeepers come from Pābna and neighbouring places. *Melās* are also held at Ashtamanisha and Haripur on the occasion of Kāli Puja and last for 7 to 20 days. Some 500 to 1,000 people from the neighbouring places, from Chātmohar and from Gurudāspur and Baraigrām in Rājshāhi attend daily.

Another *melā* is held in April on the occasion of Basanti Ashtami at Khānpura in connection with the worship of Bhairabnāth, whose idol is enshrined there. It lasts two days and is attended by 2,000 to 3,000 people. A *melā* is held at Sonāmukhi in Kāzipur police-station in the month of Aswin or Kārtik on the occasion of the Durga Puja and lasts for 20 days. Some 1,000 people from the neighbouring places and from villages in Bogra visit the *melā*, which is of sufficient importance to attract shopkeepers from Sirājganj and Bogra. A fair is held at Shāhzādpur in the winter season and lasts for about a month. About 1,000 people attend daily and shopkeepers come from Pābna, Sirājganj and Jāmtail. The special feature of this *melā* is the sale of ponies.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

GENERAL CONDITIONS. THE many rivers, *bils* and marshes render it impossible to construct permanent roads except at great expense. Large areas are swampy and water-logged, the water lying in them to a considerable depth during the rains. Roads have to be raised on embankments, which are liable to be breached by floods : where they are not raised, they are often mere tracks. The up-keep of the roads is also difficult, because the borrow-pits, from which earth is taken, remain full of water till late in the year, and they can only be utilised during the comparatively short time that they are dry. There are, moreover, numerous water-courses and rivers which require large and expensive bridges. Lastly, the soil is composed of alluvium, and all road metal has to be imported. There are, however, excellent water communications—the rivers are, in fact, the main trade routes—and in recent years the district has been given connection with other districts by the branch railway connecting Sirājganj with the main line of the Eastern Bengal Railway.

RAILWAYS. The northern section of the Eastern Bengal Railway, *i.e.*, the section from the Ganges or Padma to Siliguri, passes through the south-western corner of the district for a distance of about 5 miles. It is carried across the Ganges by the great Hardinge bridge, of which an account will be found in the last chapter. In this short length there are two railway stations, viz., Paksey (Pāksi) and Ishurdi 4¾ miles further on : the village of Ishurdi is situated in the Rajshahi district. Ishurdi is a junction for a branch line of the Eastern Bengal Railway opened in 1917, which is known as the Sāra-Sirājganj branch. It connects Ishurdi with Sirājganj and is 52¼ miles long. On it there are the stations shown in the marginal statement, which also gives the distances between them : the spellings are those adopted by the railway. A ferry

| Station. | Miles. |
|---|---|
| Ishurdi ... | ... |
| Mooladuli ... | 7¼ |
| Dhanbila ... | 4¾ |
| Chatmohar ... | 3½ |
| Gooakhora ... | 3¼ |
| Bhangoora ... | 2¾ |
| Saratnagar ... | 2½ |
| Dilpashar ... | 3 |
| Lahiri-Mohanpur | 3½ |
| Mahishakhola | 3 |
| Ullapara ... | 2 |
| Salop ... | 3¼ |
| Jamtoil ... | 4¼ |
| Kalia-Haripur | 3¾ |
| Sirajganj ... | 2¼ |
| Sirajganj Bazar | 1¼ |
| Siraganj Court | 2 |
| Sirajganj Ghat | 1 |

service is maintained between Sirājganj Ghāt and Jagannāthganj, from which there is connection with Mymensingh and Dacca. A daily through passenger train in each direction has been introduced between Calcutta and Sirājganj Ghāt. A motor service also runs between Pābna and Ishurdi in connection with the railway.

WATER TRANSPORT.

Both the Ganges and Brahmaputra are navigable throughout the year by steamers and country boats of the largest size, and the Baral and the Hurasāgar by boats of 4 tons burden throughout the year; the other minor water-courses are navigable during the rainy season. The Phuljhur, which was formerly navigable throughout its course, has formed shallows at Nalka and Ullāpāra, which make it impassable for heavily laden craft. The Dhānbāndi, which passes through Sirājganj, is connected with the Simla Khāl, and ultimately with the Jamuna, by the Kāta Khāl and with the Pāngāsi river and the Phuljhur by the Telkupi Khāl; these artificial channels are, however, only navigable during the rains.

Steamer services.

There is a daily steamer service of the India General Navigation and Railway Company between Pabna and Paksey on the Eastern Bengal Railway, the journey taking about 3 hours up-stream and 2 hours down-stream: the steamers run twice in each direction daily. The large steamers of the Ganges despatch service (Goalundo to Digha near Patna) call at the marginally-noted places; a steamer also plies between Pābna and Kushtia, a journey of three hours.

| Place | Distance in miles. |
|---|---|
| Sātbāria ... ... ... | ... |
| Sengrām Ghāt ... ... | 4 |
| Pābna ... ... .. | 17 |
| Sāra ... ... ... | 36 |

On the Jamuna or Brahmaputra the Goalundo-Assam mail steamer stops at Sirājganj. There are also three steamer stations at Arālia to the south, at Sthal Char and at Belkuchi, at all of which a local steamer service plying from Goalundo to Bāhādurābad calls daily. There is also a purely local ferry steamer, which crosses the river between Sirājganj and Subarnakhāli. This is mainly used for the transport of cattle on their way from Bihar to Mymensingh.

ROADS.

There are now 34 miles of metalled roads in the district and 691 miles of unmetalled roads, besides the tracks maintained by local authorities which are known as village roads: these tracks have a total length of 253 miles. These figures

may be compared with those given below of the lengths of the roads in the 18th century as stated by Rennell in "*A Description of the Roads in Bengal and Bahar, 1778.*" These, it must be remembered, were the only roads in the district.

Old roads.

The headquarters town of Pābna then had connection with Calcutta by a road from "Custy" to "Seerpour in Mahmanshi," of which Rennell's details are given in the margin.

| Names of places. | Distances in miles and furlongs. M. | F. | Rivers and nullahs to be crossed. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Custee ... | 127 | 6 | (from Calcutta). |
| Pubna Nazirpour ... | 10 | 0 | Ganges. |
| Syngpine | 10 | 6 | |
| Chatmol | 9 | 4 | Attri. |
| Hurryal ... | 10 | 0 | Goor. |
| Nowgong | 3 | 0 | |
| Tarwas ... | 6 | 1 | |
| Bowanypur ... | 10 | 0 | |
| Seerpour | 8 | 2 | |

The claims of this road to be considered a road according to modern standards are doubtful, for it appears to have been a mere track. Custy or Custee is easily recognizable as Kushtia in the Nadia district: Syngpyne is Sainpain Hāt on the Atrai river, 9 miles north-east of Pābna. Chatmol is Chātmohar and Hurryal is Hāndiāl. Nowgong has not been identified, but may possibly be Naughāt. Bowanypour is Bhawānipur just across the border in Bogra district and Seerpour in Mahmanshi is easily identifiable as Sherpur now in the Bogra district.

Pābna was connected with Rājshāhi on the west by a road running to Pootya (the modern Puthia) and thence to Bauleah (Rampur-Boālia), and with Dacca on the east by a road running to Jaffiergunge as shown in the margin.

| Name of places. | Distances in miles and furlongs. M. | F. | Rivers and nullahs. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jaffiergunge | | | |
| Ruttungunge ... | 10 | 0 | 2 rivers. |
| Nazagunge | 8 | 4 | |
| Sujanagur | 12 | 4 | |
| Pubna ... | 12 | 0 | Arti. |

Jaffiergunge is Jāfarganj. Ruttungunge is the modern village of Ratanganj in the Mathura thāna. Nazagunge is easily recognized as Nāzirganj in the Sujānagar thāna.

In the north-east of the districts some roads radiated from "Nulshi Imampour." These are the names of two villages 4 or 5 miles south-east of Sirājganj, which diluviated many years ago and reformed as *chars*, viz., Imāmpur on the right bank and Nalsia on the left bank, the steamer track lying between them. One road ran to Potul Cangmary (Kāgmāri) and Attyah

(Atia), places in the Mymensingh district. A second road was as shown in the margin. The site of Belkuchi, 11 miles south of Sirājganj, is now under the river. Cookanny is the modern Khukni in Shāhzādpur thāna: the Betil-Shāhzādpur road passes through the village. A third road connected "Nulshi" with Jāfarganj in the Dacca district: none of the places mentioned by Rennell as lying on it are in the Pābna district. A fourth went to Sherpur in Bogra, passing through Rummutgunge (Rahmatganj, 2 miles west of Sirājganj) and Pongash (Pāngāsi, 6½ miles west of Sirājganj). Further south there was a road from Dacca to Shāhzādpur with the marginally-noted places on it. Attyah, as already noticed, is Atia in Mymensingh. Huttybarry is Hātibāri, 2½ miles, south of Chauhali in this district, and Bailtoil is Beltoul near Shāhzādpur. Lastly, there was a road running from east to west through this district, which connected Atia with Nātor in the Rājshāhi district; Rennell's details are given in the margin. Santosh is in Mymensingh. Gundruckpur is possibly Gandharbhapur in this district. Belcuchy has already been mentioned. Dowlatpour is Daulatpur, 2 miles north of Salap (2 miles south of Khāmārkhanda). Burrumcopileah is Brahmakopalia, 4 miles north of Ullāpāra on the Rāiganj road. Tarwas is Tārās. The other places are in the Nātor subdivision of the Rājshāhi district.

*Nulshi-Imampour to Shazadpour.*

| | M. | F. |
|---|---|---|
| Belcuchy ... | 6 | 4 |
| Cookanny ... | 8 | 6 |
| Shazadpour ... | 5 | 4 |

| | M. | F. | Rivers. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Attyah-Huttybarry ... | 10 | 0 | Lojung & Joobnee. |
| Bailtoil ... | 7 | 4 | Nullah. |
| Shahzadpour... | 4 | 0 | Coni. |

| | M. | F. | Rivers. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Attyah-Santosh ... | 4 | 2 | Lojung. |
| Gundruckpour | 4 | 7 | Joobnee. |
| Belcuchy ... | 9 | 3 | Ccni. |
| Dowlatpour ... | 7 | 1 | 2 nullahs. |
| Burramcopileah | 5 | 6 | Fooljee. |
| Tarwas ... | 13 | 6 | |
| Beeas ... | 7 | 4 | Nullah. |
| Cullum ... | 8 | 1 | Goor. |
| Gobinpour ... | 6 | 5 | Attri. |
| Nattore ... | 5 | 0 | |

**Main roads.**

The following is a brief account of the principal roads now in existence :—

The Pābna-Sirājganj road (*viâ* Ataikula and Bera), sometimes called the new Pābna-Sirājganj road to distinguish it from the old road mentioned below *viâ* Shāhzādpur and Ullâpāra, has a total length of 53 miles. At Berākola on the 27th mile a ferry plies all the year round over the river Hurāsāgar. There is an inspection bunglow at Ataikula on the 12th mile and another at Bera on the 27th mile.

The Pābna-Sāra road is 18 miles long. It passes over numerous waterways which are bridged, and there is a ferry which plies during the rains over the Ichhāmati river below Pābna town. There is a rest-shed at Dasuria on the 12th mile and an inspection bunglow at Sāra on the 18th mile.

The old Pābna-Sirajganj road (*viâ* Shāhzādpur and Ullāpāra), which has a length of 40½ miles, takes off from the new Pābna-Sirājganj road at Ataikula, 12 miles from Pābna. It is partly raised and partly a surface track. Ferries ply all the year round over the Phuljhur river at Ullāpāra and over the Baral river at Rautara. There is an inspection bungalow at Ullāpāra, 15 miles from Sirājganj.

The Pābna-Mathura road (*viâ* Tāntiband and Dulai) is 28½ miles long. The portion of the road from Pabna to Tāntiband (12 miles) is raised and passable during floods. Ferries ply in the rainy season at Chāndipur, Porādānga and Kāsināthpur on the 13th, 14th and 25th miles. There is an inspection bungalow at Dulai on the 20th mile of the road. On the 8th mile a bridge carries it over the Koladi Jola and there are also bridges on the 11th mile at Sadullapur and on the 12th mile at Tāntiband.

The Pābna-Chātmohar road (39½ miles in length) branches off from Rānigrām on the 6th mile of the Pābna-Sāra road, and after passing through Chātmohar goes to Tārās and thence to Rānirhāt on the district boundary. The name is therefore only partly and not exhaustively descriptive. It is passable throughout the year up to Chātmohar, 18½ miles from Pābna, where there is an inspection bungalow. The remainder is passable in the dry season only. At Mulgrām on the 14th mile and at Chātmohar-Natunbazar on the 20th mile ferries ply during the rains; another ferry plies during the dry season on the 23rd mile at Baisha. There are small bridges on the 15th, 17th and 18th miles.

The Sirājganj-Bogra road *viâ* Nalka is 18½ miles long. A ferry plies across the Phuljhur river at Nalka all the year. This road is liable to be breached by floods and was seriously damaged by the unusually high floods of 1906, which left breaches at Betuali, Panchil, Chakipāra, Ghurka, Bhughāti, Saraikhāl and Kishorkhāli on the 6th, 11th, 12th, 15th, 17th and 19th miles, respectively, so big that they could only be ferried across.

The Sirājganj-Bogra road *viâ* Pāngāsi and Dhāngora is the old road to Bogra and passes through two important marts at Pāngāsi and Dhāngora. The length of the road is 14½ miles. Ferries ply during floods over the Chandrakona Khāl (4th mile), the Bahuli river (4th mile), the Pāngāshi river (7th mile) and the Hashil Khāl (10th mile). On the 13th mile at Dhāngora a ferry plies all the year over the Phuljhur river.

At Sirājganj the road is carried over the Dhānbāndi river by a bridge of 120 feet in one span, of which an account will be found in the article on Sirājganj in the last chapter.

# CHAPTER IX.

## LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

LAND TENURES.

EXCEPT for the *diāra* area, where there has been a settlement, there is little detailed information about the land tenures; but generally speaking they have few peculiar features. There is a small number of *patni* tenures: the town of Pābna itself is held on such a tenure. The system of produce-rents is fairly common; under this the actual cultivator, who is known as *bargāit* or *bargādār*, provides the cattle, ploughs and half the seed, besides the labour, while the *jotdār*, from whom he holds, gives the land rent-free and half the seed, and each party receives half the produce.

In the *diāras* of the Ganges or Padma there are numerous *jotdārs*, some having tenures and some holdings, under the proprietors: all tenancies are called *jot*, sub-infeudation being expressed by the terms *dar* and *nim*. Holdings are very small in size, the average area being only 1¼ acre for a ryot paying a cash-rent and three-fifths of an acre for a ryot paying a produce-rent. More than a quarter of the land is let at a produce-rent. The ryots who pay produce-rents generally hold the same land for many years in succession, a son often succeeding his father; the rent almost invariably consists of half the crop in the case of paddy and of one-third in the case of jute. The landlords generally do not supply the seed, but if they do, they take half the straw as well as half the paddy. Produce-rents are on the average more than four times the cash-rents in this locality and as the cultivator does not get a fair return for his labour, the land is not so carefully cultivated as that for which a cash-rent is paid: the average cash-rent of settled and occupancy-ryots is Rs. 2-12-9 an acre. Altogether 9 per cent. of the ryot's land is sublet to under-ryots, whose holdings average only six-tenths of an acre.*

In most of the villages in the Jamuna *diārās* cultivating ryots hold directly under the proprietors. There are a few *patnis*, but very little other sub-infeudation. The ryoti-holdings

* B. C. Prance, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the Riparian Areas of District Pābna, 1916.

are known by the name of *jots*. Most were created before the land was brought under cultivation. The average size of a holding was found to be 2·80 acres. For the most part the ryots have a right of occupancy; those not so recorded being chiefly new settlers in the recently reformed *char* villages. Three hundred and eighty-seven tenancies were recorded in the names of persons who had taken possession of *char* lands without the express permission of the landlord. This is an every-day occurrence; the occupiers sooner or later gain recognition, *i.e.*, a cash-rent is fixed. They have therefore been recorded as ryots. The rent-free tenancies are mostly *chākrān* and *pirpāl* tenancies. The former are granted to washermen, barbers, *mālis*, etc.; the latter have a religious origin. Transfers of ryoti-holdings or more generally of part holdings occur frequently, but they are never recognized by the landlords until the customary *salāmi* is paid. Nevertheless the landlord seldom attempts to evict the purchaser even of an entire holding, as such a proceeding would tend to discourage the practice of transfer, which is a source of great profit to the landlord. In recent years there is a growing tendency for the land to pass into the hands of the money-lending class, who sublet at very high rates, often to the very tenant against whom they have got a decree. The tendency is equally marked in the case of *khās mahāls*, where transfers are recognized without any exaction of *salāmi*.*

ESTATES.

According to the returns for 1920-21 there are 1,966 estates on the tauzi roll, with a current demand of land revenue amounting to Rs. 4,42,475: of these 1,814 are permanently-settled, 68 are temporarily-settled and 84 (with a current demand of Rs. 50,741) are held direct by Government. At the end of the year there were no less than 4,613 separate accounts.

SURVEYS AND SETTLEMENTS.

A survey and settlement of the riverain area in the bed and on the bank of the Jamuna were carried out in connection with the Mymensingh settlement, in order that both banks of this constantly shifting river might be mapped as they stood in one season. The survey was begun at the end of 1911 and was followed by a record-of-rights, the records being finally published in 1916-17. The area taken up was 164 square miles with 235 villages. More than 70 per cent. of the area falls in the three Mymensingh *parganas* of Atia (Tangail), Bāra Bāju and Kāgmāri and portions appertain to Yusufshāhi (Isupshāhi) of this district, Sona Bāju (Rājshāhi) and Demrāi (Bogra).

* F. A. Sachse, Mymensingh Survey and Settlement Report, 1920.

ROAD AND PUBLIC WORKS CESSES.

The number of estates assessed to road and public works cesses in 1920-21 was 2,008, viz., 1,946 revenue-paying estates, 45 revenue-free estates and 17 rent-free lands, and the total current demand was Rs. 1,18,638. The number of separate accounts was 4,300. There were also 6,562 tenures assessed to cesses. The gross rental of the district is now Rs. 28,02,226 compared with the valuation of Rs. 15,14,755 made when road-cess was first assessed under Act X of 1871—an increase of Rs. 12,87,491.

RELATIONS OF LANDLORDS AND TENANTS.

Many large properties belong to non-resident zamīndārs, while minor estates have been split up and sublet to a large extent. This had closely affected the position of the tenants, for the power of landlords is greatest in compact well-managed estates under resident proprietors and is weakened where estates are subdivided and there are a number of petty shareholders constantly squabbling. As a result of this state of affairs, combinations of tenants against landlords are fairly common in the district, more especially in the Sirājganj subdivision, where cases arising from disputes between landlords and tenants occupy much of the Subdivisional Officer's time. The most remarkable instance of such combinations is the agrarian movement of 1873 described in Chapter II, by which the cultivators defeated their landlords' attempts to enhance their rent-rolls. This led Sir William Hunter to remark in 1876 in the preface to the ninth volume of the Statistical Account of Bengal dealing with Pābna—"The rural population have proved themselves quick to appreciate and to act upon the rights which English rule secures to rich and poor. They have fought out with keen persistence, but with few ebullitions of violence, the struggle between landlord and tenant, and are conducting before our eyes an agrarian revolution by due course of law."

At the same time the power of the zamīndārs appears to have been always much greater than in the districts of Eastern Bengal. From time immemorial the rural administration has been practically in their hands. If, for instance, two tenants have a dispute, the matter is commonly taken to the zamīndār's cutcherry for settlement, and frequently, if a crime is committed, the zamīndār or his agent decides whether the police should be informed, or when a complaint is made, the offending party is sent for and the case heard. If it is merely a dispute about the possession of land, the case may be disposed of out-of-hand by deciding who shall have possession, but in cases of misconduct fines are often imposed. Much useful work is done

by the prompt disposal of petty disputes on the spot, and, in practice, a cultivator can get redress from petty wrongs without the expense of a trial before a distant court ; but the system is obviously open to abuse, *e.g.*, crimes may be hushed up and never reported to the authorities, and when reported, delay is caused by the parties going first to the zamīndār's cutcherry. The system is, in any case, acquiesced in by the cultivators themselves, largely because of the fear that recalcitrance, *e.g.*, refusal to pay a fine, would entail loss of their holdings. The power of the zamīndārs to enforce their will rests on the insecurity of the cultivator's tenure. The ordinary occupancy-ryot has, as a rule, no *patta:* the only documents from which he can prove title are generally rent-receipts, and these do not show what land he holds. In the event of litigation he is dependent on oral evidence of possession for proof of his right to any particular plot. In the case of Muhammadans, moreover, claims are easily trumped up owing to the operation of the Moslem law of inheritance. When a man's property is divided after his death, there is usually no record of the partition and it is easy for an astute *naib* to bring an obnoxious tenant to book by unearthing, say, a brother's widow who has remarried in another village and getting her to make a colourable claim to the land and to execute a conveyance in favour of some creature of the zamīndār.

The levy of *abwābs*, or contributions over and above the regular rent, prevails in most zamīndāris. Their levy, when the zamīndār has unusual expenses to meet, *e.g.*, a marriage, is a matter of old custom, and so long as the demand is kept within customary limits, no serious objections are made: the cultivators would rather pay a casual demand of this kind than consent to an enhancement of rent or run the risk of incurring the zamīndār's enmity. His power to levy such cesses is, in fact, limited by custom and the capacity of the tenant to pay: he could not enforce payment against organized opposition and it is not worth his while to stir up a combination by unduly exorbitant demands. Peaceable enough in ordinary times, the Pābna peasants are excitable and ready to resort to violence if there is a mass movement. Moreover, a landlord can generally manage to induce the more influential tenants to pay a moderate demand; they have the largest holdings, occupy, it may be, the most land in excess of what they pay rent for, and have most to lose from a quarrel with the landlord. If they can be induced not to demur, others will not stand out.

GOVERNMENT KHASMAHALS.

The following is a statement of the Government khâsmahâls in the district: the letter D shows those which are *diāra* estates, and the letter J those which are *jalkar*:

| Police-station in which situated. | Name. | | Tauzi No. | Area in acres. | Annual demand of rent. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Rs. | A. | P. |
| Mathura (Bera). | Alukdia *alias* Char Baisnabi ... | D | 101 | 815 | 1,225 | 0 | 0 |
| Sujānagar | Island Char Khānpur | D | 2140 | 10·90 | 1,176 | 11 | 0 |
| | Island Char Mukharji | D | 2141 | 742 | 1,149 | 9 | 0 |
| | Jādubājra ... | D | 2151 | 7 | 7 | 14 | 7 |
| Pābna ... | Bharsa ... | D | 117 | 404 | 230 | 14 | 0 |
| | Char Niyāmatullapur | D | 1726 | 45 | 139 | 0 | 6 |
| | Char Balarāmpur ... | D | 1902 | 1,985 | 1,718 | 5 | 11 |
| Sāra ... | Island Char Dādapur | D | 1780 | 272 | 72 | 10 | 3 |
| | Semul Chora ... | D | 1838 | 523 | 662 | 14 | 0 |
| | Kururia Digar ... | D | 2152 | 2,580 | 2,260 | 5 | 0 |
| Sirājganj ... | Barasimul ... | D | 1755 | 804 | 1,069 | 8 | 6 |
| | Tāluk Baneswar Das | D | 1837 | 58 | 41 | 1 | 9 |
| | Island Char Bell* ... | D | 1908 | 1,425 | 1,393 | 6 | 3 |
| | Tāluk Padma Lochan Ghose ... | D | 1140 | 562 | 423 | 11 | 9 |
| | Chatta Kārīm Khān | D | 1671 | Not known | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| | Tāluk Manill Ram Gobinda Ram Sarma | D | 1790 | 615 | 618 | 2 | 0 |
| | Tāluk Rām Prasād Neogi ... | D | 1793 | 179 | 47 | 1 | 10 |
| | Char Belua ... | D | 1794 | 67 | 41 | 0 | 6 |
| | Taluk Yarmamud ... | D | 1796 | 507 | 276 | 10 | 6 |

* Named after Sir Nicholas Beatson-Bell, formerly Subdivisional Officer of Sirājganj.

| Police-station in which situated. | Name. | | Tauzi No. | Area in acres. | Annual demand of rent. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Rs. | A. | P. |
| Sirājganj—*concld.* | Taluk Lal Mamud ... | D | 1797 | 333 | 329 | 15 | 0 |
| | Taluk Fajail ... | D | 1839 | 40 | 20 | 11 | 0 |
| | Taluk Derap ... | D | 1840 | 40 | 23 | 7 | 6 |
| | Taluk Benode Rām Dutta ... | D | 2111 | 123 | 91 | 10 | 6 |
| | Char Girish Momin | D | 2203 | 1,037 | 904 | 7 | 0 |
| Shāhzādpur | Kurki ... | D | 1782 | 440 | 341 | 3 | 3 |
| | Sakpāl ... | D | 1893 | 351 | 824 | 5 | 0 |
| | REGISTER No. 32 (II). | | | | | | |
| Mathura (Bera) ... | Durgapur ... | D | 1729 | 40 | 57 | 8 | 0 |
| Sāinthia ... | Jalkar Asbuda ... | J | 1778 | ... | 150 | 0 | 0 |
| | Jalkar Eranda Bahuti | J | 1765 | ... | 30 | 0 | 0 |
| Sujānagar | Char Srīkrishnapur | D | 2200 | 1,003 | 1,042 | 0 | 0 |
| Chātmohar | Jalkar Porāgbāti ... | J | 1769 | ... | 61 | 8 | 0 |
| | Jalkar Faziljana ... | J | 1770 | ... | 86 | 8 | 0 |
| | Jalkar Kachua ... | J | 1772 | ... | 82 | 8 | 0 |
| | Jalkar Badal ... | J | 1176 | ... | 19 | 8 | 0 |
| | Jalkar Demra ... | J | 1767 | ... | 360 | 0 | 0 |
| Shāhzādpur | Jalkar Nāgdunra ... | J | 1766 | ... | 300 | 0 | 0 |
| | Jalkar Pathailhāt ... | J | 1774 | ... | 150 | 0 | 0 |
| Ullāpāra ... | Jalkar Saiderbād ... | J | 1778 | ... | 16 | 0 | 0 |
| Sirājganj ... | Chandani Chaidya Khada .. | D | 1795 | 119 | 105 | 0 | 0 |
| | Taluk Jugdhar Gandhādhar ... | D | 1801 | 97 | 28 | 0 | 0 |
| | Taluk Gour Krishna Jiban ... | D | 555 | 459 | 303 | 0 | 0 |
| | Island Char Jamunābāli ... | D | 2097 | 724 | 150 | 0 | 0 |

| Police-station in which situated. | Name. | Tauzi No. | Area in acres. | Annual demand of rent. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | REGISTER No. 33 (II). | | | Rs. A. P. |
| Sāra ... | Nāmjād Bahir Char D | 1725 | 7,574 | 7,991 9 0 |
| | Diāra Tāluk Gopi Sundari Dāssya ... D | 2212 | 122 | 158 1 0 |
| | Diāra Tāluk Rai Kamalini and others D | 2213 | 31 | 77 10 0 |
| | Diāra Tāluk Dhirendra Nath Ray ... D | 2216 | 47 | 115 3 0 |
| | REGISTER No. 32 (II). | | | |
| | Diāra Tāluk Bhabendra Chandra Ray and others ... D | 2217 | 31 | 63 13 0 |
| | Diāra Tāluk Ganesh Janani Debi and others ... D | 2218 | 20 | 63 6 0 |
| | Diāra Tāluk Naresh Narayan Ray and others ... D | 2224 | 16 | 18 15 0 |
| | Diāra Tāluk Hemanta Kumar Ray and others ... D | 2226 | 38 | 56 3 0 |
| | Diāra Tāluk Raja Pramada Bhusan Deb ... D | 2227 | 28 | 34 10 0 |
| | Char Dādapur ... D | 1733 | 1,295 | 478 7 4 |
| | Char Paburia ... D | 1727 | 34 | 44 11 6 |
| Sujānagar | Diāra Tāluk Gopi Sundari Dassya ... D | 2159 | 131 | 336 0 0 |
| | Diāra Tāluk Husain Chaudhuri ... D | 2163 | 21 | 64 12 0 |
| | Diāra Tāluk Jnanada Govinda Chaudhuri D | 2164 | 7 | 20 0 0 |
| | Diāra Tāluk Srish Govinda Chaudhuri D | 2165 | 17 | 46 8 0 |

| Police-station in which situated. | Name. | | Tauzi No. | Area in acres. | Annual demand of rent. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Rs. | A. | P. |
| Mathura (Bera) ... | Char Penchakola ... | D | 1702 | 1,523·0 | 2,511 | 3 | 0 |
| Pābna ... | Bāsudebpur ... | D | 2104 | 346 | 533 | 8 | 10 |
| | Modhupur ... | D | 2139 | 312 | 522 | 3 | 6 |
| Sirājganj | Char Bania Gānti ... | D | 1747 | 233 | 362 | 4 | 3 |
| | Randhunibāri ... | D | 1704 | 101 | 191 | 10 | 3 |
| | Rājābāri Kālikāpur | D | 1745 | 1,081 | 1,935 | 7 | 9 |
| | Bag Chaura Digar ... | D | 1707 | 1,690 | 607 | 13 | 3 |
| | Syāmgop ... | D | 1736 | 205 | 285 | 10 | 0 |
| | Bora Berakharua ... | D | 1748 | 170 | 123 | 1 | 3 |
| | Chhata Bera Kharua | D | 1749 | 203 | 213 | 7 | 3 |
| | Derta Char and Barui | D | 1754 | 447 | 227 | 6 | 3 |
| | Gatia Aknadighi ... | D | 2112 | 922 | 921 | 8 | 6 |
| Shāhzādpur | Māma ... | D | 1716 | 486 | 364 | 1 | 3 |
| | Narkair Sufaltāla ... | D | 1720 | 248 | 91 | 5 | 0 |
| | Nandina Mādhu ... | D | 1722 | 200 | 158 | 1 | 9 |
| | Char Marakadai ... | D | 1718 | 152 | 361 | 7 | 9 |
| | Kismat Kawalia ... | D | 1738 | 3,116 | 501 | 11 | 10 |
| | Pukhuria Digar ... | D | 1739 | 2,644 | 3,504 | 5 | 3 |
| | Kawālia Digar ... | D | 1740 | 4,771 | 2,378 | 9 | 4 |
| | Ghusuria Digar ... | D | 1829 | 63 | 100 | 5 | 11 |
| | Mīrkutia Digar ... | D | 1830 | 4,460 | 5,842 | 12 | 2 |
| | Hijulia Digar ... | D | 1835 | 901 | 696 | 3 | 6 |
| | Chauberia Digar ... | D | 2156 | 111 | 104 | 9 | 0 |

| Police-station in which situated. | Name. | | Tauzi No. | Area in acres. | Annual demand of rent. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Rs. | A. | P. |
| Shāhzādpur —*concld.* | Char Metuani ... | D | 2157 | 85 | 342 | 5 | 2 |
| | Ditto ... | D | 2158 | 121 | 235 | 9 | 6 |
| | Char Salimabād ... | D | 2201 | 160 | 595 | 8 | 2 |
| | Char Nakālia ... | D | 2202 | 273 | 145 | 7 | 9 |
| | Shāhpur Digar ... | D | 1737 | 1,690 | 1,526 | 8 | 3 |
| | Dhalai ... | D | 1743 | 969 | 196 | 5 | 6 |
| | Attapāra (II) ... | D | 2233 | 144 | 281 | 3 | 5 |

*Parganas*

The *parganas* of the district are shown in the following statement, which gives in the case of *parganas* lying in more than one police-station the principal different police-stations in which they are situated and also in the case of those *parganas* the whole or the greater part of which lies within the ambit of a single police-station the names of those police-stations :—

| Name of *pargana.* | Police-stations principally included in the *pargana.* | Name of *pargana.* | Police-station in which the *pargana* is principally situated. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Atia ... | Chauhāli ... | Amirābād ... | Bera. |
| | Sāinthia ... | ... | ... |
| | Shāhzādpur ... | Belgāchi ... | Sujānagar. |
| Bāju Chappa ... | Atgharia ... | Bhar Fatehjangpur. | Pābna. |
| | Pābna ... | ... | ... |
| | Sāinthia ... | ... | ... |
| | Sujānagar ... | Datia Jahāngīrpur. | Rāiganj. |

| Name of *pargana.* | Police-stations principally included in the *pargana.* | Name of *pargana.* | Police-station in which the *pargana* is principally situated. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bājurās Mahābatpur. | Atgharia ... | ... | ... |
| | Sāra ... | Gaihāta ... | Ullāpāra. |
| Bājurās Nāzirpur | Atgharia ... | Gangārāmpur ... | Chātmohar. |
| | Pābna ... | ... | ... |
| | Sāra ... | Hāndiāl ... | Chātmohar. |
| Barabāju ... | Kāzipur ... | Kāntanagar ... | Sāra. |
| | Rāiganj ... | Kāsimnagar ... | Bera |
| | Sirājganj ... | Khatta ... | Pābna |
| Bhāturia ... | Atgharia ... | Kururia ... | Sāra. |
| | Chātmohar ... | Lashkarpur ... | *id.* |
| | Tārās ... | Loknāthpur ... | *id.* |
| Birhampur ... | Bera ... | Nasībshāhi ... | Sujānagar. |
| | Pābna ... | Nāzir Inaitpur ... | *id.* |
| | Sāinthia ... | Nāzirpur ... | Farīdpur. |
| | Sujānagar ... | Nijbājurās ... | Sāra. |
| Islāmpur ... | Pābna ... | Pratāpbāju ... | Atgharia. |
| | Sāra ... | ... | ... |
| | Sujānagar ... | Pukuria ... | Sirājganj. |
| Kāgmāri ... | Kāzipur ... | ... | ... |
| | Sirājganj ... | Rokanpur ... | Pābna. |
| Kātārmahāl ... | Chātmohar ... | Shāh Aujial ... | Sāra. |
| | Rāiganj ... | Silbaras ... | Tārās. |
| | Tārās ... | Sujābād ... | Bera. |
| | Ultāpāra ... | Tārāgunia ... | Sāra. |
| Mihmānshāhi ... | Rāiganj ... | Ukha Umarpur | Ullāpāra. |
| | Tārās ... | ... | ... |

| Name of *pargana*. | Police-stations principally included in the *pargana*. | Name of *pargana*. | Police-station in which the *pargana* is principally situated. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Muhammadshāhi | Sujānagar ... | ... | ... |
| Sinduri ... | Bera .. | ... | ... |
| | Sāinthia ... | ... | ... |
| | Sujānagar ... | ... | ... |
| Sonābāju ... | Atgharia ... | ... | ... |
| | Chātmohar ... | ... | ... |
| | Farīdpur ... | ... | ... |
| Surtan Pratāp | Bera .. | ... | ... |
| | Sāinthia ... | ... | ... |
| Yusufnagar Tappa. | Pābna ... | ... | ... |
| | Sāinthia ... | ... | ... |
| Yusufshāhi ... | Belkuchi ... | ... | ... |
| | Chauhāli ... | ... | ... |
| | Kamārkhanda ... | ... | ... |
| | Shāhzādpur ... | ... | ... |
| | Ullāpāra ... | ... | ... |

# CHAPTER X.

## GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

SUB-DIVISIONS AND STAFF.

THERE are two subdivisions, viz., Sadar and Sirājganj. The sanctioned magisterial staff under the District Magistrate at Pābna consists of three officers with first class magisterial powers and one officer with second or third class powers, in addition to the Superintendent of Excise and Salt. The Subdivisional Officer at Sirājganj is assisted by a Deputy Magistrate with first class powers, and another Deputy Magistrate is stationed at Shāhzādpur. The latter generally tries cases from the Mathura thāna except those from the southern portion, which are generally heard at Pābna for the convenience of the parties, for whom the Ganges steamer service provides easy communication.

A Subdivisional Officer of the Public Works Department, who has his headquarters at Pābna, is in charge of the Government buildings in the district as well as of the protective works designed to prevent river erosion : the district for the purpose of public works administration is under the Superintending Engineer, Northern Circle. There are also two Inspectors of Co-operative Societies for the supervision and control of the co-operative movement in the district.

The criminal work of the Sadar subdivision is fairly heavy, and the work in connection with Government estates and the tauzi, certificate and land registration departments is heavier than in other districts of the division. The Sirājganj subdivision is an onerous charge: the criminal work is heavier than in any Sadar subdivision in the division except Bogra; income-tax work is important, and there are several Government estates in which disputes about alluvion and diluvion cause a considerable amount of work. The bulk of the criminal cases come from Sirājganj and Shāhzādpur. The salient statistics for the two subdivisions in 1919-20 are given in the following statement :—

| Subdivision. | Area in sq. miles. | Population, 1921. | Criminal cases disposed of. | Cases committed to sessions. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pābna (Sadar) ... | 789 | 557,000 | 1,548 | 18 |
| Sirājganj ... ... | 889 | 833,000 | 2,317 | 27 |

| Subdivision. | Certificates issued. | Government estates held direct. | | Letters issued and received. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No. | Demand. | |
| | | | Rs. | |
| Pābna ... ... | 2,049 | 9 | 4,575 | 20,398 |
| Sirājganj ... ... | 387 | 26 | 6,806 | 8,831 |

For some time past it has been thought that the Sirājganj subdivision is too heavy a charge: a partial partition of it has in fact been effected by posting a full-powered Deputy Magistrate to Shāhzādpur, in addition to the one working at Sirājganj itself. In 1912 a scheme was drawn up for the constitution of a new subdivision in the south-eastern portion of the district, including parts of the present Sirājganj and Sadar subdivisions with headquarters at Bera. The District Administration Committee (1914) recommended the adoption of this scheme, under which the proposed (Bera) subdivision would have included Shāhzādpur and Chauhāli police-stations from Sirājganj, and Mathura, Sāinthia and east Sujānagar police-stations from Sadar.

Subsequently conditions were materially altered by the opening of the railway from Ishurdi in the south-western corner of the district to Sirājganj in the north-east. It was considered desirable that the headquarters of a new subdivision should be situated on the railway, so as to take full advantage of this important means of communication. A new scheme was accordingly prepared for the creation of a subdivision in the western part of the district, comprising the Chātmohar police-station with the Farīdpur outpost (in the Sadar subdivision) and the Ullāpāra police-station with the Kāmārkhanda outpost and the Rāiganj police-station with

| Revenue thāna. | Police-station. |
|---|---|
| **Sadar subdivision.** | |
| Pabna ... | Pābna. Atgharia. Sāra. |
| Dulai ... | Sāinthia. Bera. |
| **Sirajganj subdivision.** | |
| Sirājganj ... | Sirājganj. Kāzipur. |
| Sirājganj, Ullāpāra and Shāhzādpur. | Belkuchi. |
| Shāhzādpur ... | Shāhzādpur. Chaubāli. |
| **Proposed subdivision.** | |
| Chātmohar ... | Chātmohar. Farīdpur. |
| Ullāpāra ... | Ullāpāra. Kāmārkhanda. |
| Rāiganj ... | Rāiganj. Tārās. |

affording relief to the Sirājganj and Sadar subdivisions and taking full advantage of the new means of communication opened up by the Sāra-Sirājganj Railway, would have left the whole of the *char* area on the Jamuna under the administration of the Subdivisional Officer of Sirājganj, and the Magistrate's Court at Shāhzādpur would not have been affected. The constitution of the three subdivisions, as it would have been under this scheme, is shown in the marginal statement.

The scheme was published for criticism in 1918, and the opinions of the public were invited by Government, which was inclined to favour Bhānguria as the headquarters of the new subdivision. It was stated :—"Ullāpāra, which is an important trade centre, was at first suggested as suitable, but further investigation has shown that the land in the neighbourhood is low-lying and would have to be raised at considerable expense in order to make it suitable for the site of a civil station. These objections do not apply to Bhānguria, which is also a station on the railway, some 15 miles west of Ullāpāra. Here high and comparatively cheap land is available, and it would be possible to take up sufficient land for a civil station and yet leave room for trade expansion. It is reported that since the opening of the railway the importance of Bhānguria as a centre of the jute trade has increased considerably and is likely to increase still further. Moreover, Bhānguria is more central than Ullāpāra in regard to the greater portion of the proposed new subdivision."

In view of the conflict of opinion and of financial stringency, which has made it impossible to provide the necessary funds, a decision of the question has been deferred.

**ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.** A District and Sessions Judge, who is also District and Sessions Judge for Bogra, has his headquarters at Pābna : at present he is assisted by an Additional District and Sessions Judge. The subordinate staff for the administration of civil justice consists of two Subordinate Judges who hold their courts at Pābna, three Munsifs at Pābna and three Munsifs (one additional) at Sirājganj. In addition to the stipendiary magistrates, there are four independent benches of honorary magistrates, at Pābna with seven members, at Sirājganj with three members, at Shāhzādpur with four members and at Ullāpāra with four members. There are also two honorary magistrates at Sāra, who are authorized to sit together as a bench with the powers of a magistrate of the third class.

**POLICE.** For the purposes of police administration the district is divided between the police-stations (investigating centres) shown

below with the thānas (revenue units) within which they are included :—

| Sadar subdivision. | | Sirājganj subdivision. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Police-station. | Thāna. | Police-station. | Thāna. |
| Atgharia ... | Pābna. | Chauhāli ... | Shāhzādpur. |
| Pābna ... | Pābna. | Shāhzādpur ... | Ullāpāra. |
| Sāra ... | Pābna. | Kāmārkhanda ... | Ullāpāra. |
| Chātmohar ... | Chātmohar. | Ullāpāra ... | Ullāpāra. |
| Faridpur ... | Chātmohar. | Kāzipur ... | Sirājganj. |
| Sāinthia ... | Dulai. | Sirājganj ... | Sirājganj. |
| Sujānagar ... | Dulai. | Rāiganj ... | Tārās. |
| | | Tārās ... | Tārās. |
| Bera ... | Mathura. | Belkuchi ... | Shāhzādpur. Sirājganj. Ullāpāra. |

The sanctioned strength of the district police force in 1920 was 605, viz., the Superintendent, 1 Assistant Superintendent, 1 Deputy Superintendent, 5 Inspectors, 53 Sub-Inspectors, 61 head-constables and 483 constables, representing one policeman to every 3 square miles and to every 2,305 persons. The village police or chaukidars numbered 2,319 with 209 dafadars viz., 1,088 chaukidars and 101 dafadars in the Pābna subdivision, and 1,231 chaukidars and 108 dafadars in the Sirājganj subdivision. On the average (including dafadars) there was one chaukidar to every three-fourths of a square mile and to every 549 persons; the cost of this force was Rs. 1,82,000, viz., Rs. 85,600 in the Pābna and Rs. 96,100 in the Sirājganj subdivisions.

A feature of the crime of Pābna is the number of riots arising from disputes in connection with the possession of the valuable lands which are constantly being formed by the changes of the courses of the great rivers. Dacoities by river as well as land are also regrettably frequent; one local gang, of whom four were convicted of dacoity in 1920, while 32 others were bound down under section 110, Criminal Procedure Code, is known to have been responsible for 17 dacoities, both by land and water, in Pābna, Rājshāhi and Mymensingh.

LS. There is a district jail at Pābna with accommodation for 235 prisoners. This total includes barracks for 144 males and 7 female convicts, 28 under-trial prisoners and 4 civil prisoners, while there are observation cells for 5 prisoners and hospital

in 1920 was 175 males and 2 females. There is also a subsidiary jail at Sirājganj with accommodation for 34 prisoners. The principal jail industries are oil-pressing, brick-making, *surki*-pounding and the weaving of carpets and cloth.

EXCISE. The excise revenue in the year 1919-20 aggregated Rs. 2,22,000, representing an incidence of 2 annas 5 pies per head of the population. Of this sum Rs. 83,000 were derived from country spirits and Rs. 1,12,000 from hemp drugs, mainly *gānja*. The average consumption in the year was half a gallon of country spirit and one-sixth of a seer of hemp drugs for every hundred persons. There were altogether 20 shops for the sale of country spirits, representing one for every 92 square miles and for every 71,000 persons: while there was on the average one shop for the sale of hemp drugs to every 8 square miles in urban areas and to every 54 square miles in rural areas.

INCOME-TAX. In 1919 altogether Rs. 70,812 were collected as income-tax from 1,068 assessees including 555 firms (the largest number in any but three districts in Bengal), 6 companies and 507 individuals.

REGISTRATION. There are nine registration offices in the district situated at the following places:—

| Sadar subdivision. | Sirājganj subdivision. |
|---|---|
| Bera (joint with Sujānagar). | Dhāngara. |
| Chātmohar. | Shāhzādpur. |
| Pābna. | Sirājganj. |
| Sujānagar. | Sthal (joint with Shāhzādpur). |
| | Ullāpāra. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Atgharia and Sāra. | Pābna. |
| Chātmohar. | Sāinthia. |
| Chauhāli. | Shāhzādpur and Belkuchi. |
| Faridpur. | Rāiganj. |
| Kāmārkhanda. | Sirājganj (two). |
| Kāzipur. | Sujānagar. |
| Mathura. | |

There are also 15 Muhammadan Registrars and Kāzis with jurisdiction over the police-stations shown in the margin.

ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. Pābna forms with Bogra a constituency for the election of a non-Muhammadan member to the Legislative Council. There are 13,503 voters on the electoral roll; 4,393 or 32½ per cent. of these voted at the election of 1920. Four candidates were nominated, and Sir Ashutosh Chaudhuri was elected by a majority of 2,811. The district is a separate constituency for the election of a Muhammadan member: for this purpose there are 13,814 voters on the electoral roll. In 1920 Khān Bahādur Wasimuddin Ahmad was elected by a majority of 1,569 over the only other candidate. Altogether 1,703 electors recorded their votes or 12·3 per cent. of the electorate.

# CHAPTER XI.

## LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

ISTRICT OARD.

THE District Board used to consist of 16 members, of whom half were appointed by Government, with the District Magistrate as *ex-officio* Chairman. In 1921, however, it was directed that the membership of the Board should be increased to 24 members, of whom only one-third are to be appointed by Government; seven of the members are to be elected by the Sadar Local Board and nine by the Sirājganj Government Local Board. In the same year also the District Board was given the privilege of electing a non-official Chairman; the first Chairman, so elected, was Khān Bahādur Wasimuddin Ahmad, M.L.C. The income of the Board has been rising steadily, increasing from Rs. 1,09,000 in 1900-01 to Rs. 1,64,000 in 1910-11. Since then it has been still further increased owing to the Government making over to the Board the receipts from the public works cess, and in 1920-21 it aggregated Rs. 2,86,886 excluding the opening balance.

The Disirict Board maintains three dispensaries and gives grants-in-aid to ten dispensaries, as shown in the margin. It also subsidizes doctors at Atgharia, Chhatak, Gandhail, Kansona, Mirkutia and Solakura. For the furtherance of education the Board maintains one middle school and 93 primary schools, besides the Elliott-Banamāli School, and it gives aid to 25 middle schools, 68 upper primary schools and 1,071 lower primary schools in addition to 17 other schools. The

*Dispensaries maintained.*

1. Chak Sohāgpur Dharanidhar.
2. Kāzipur.
3. Sthal.

*Dispensaries aided.*

1. Bera.
2. Bharenga.
3. Chātmohar.
4. Pābna Sadar.
5. Raiganj.
6. Shāhzādpur.
7. Sirājganj Victoria.
8. Sitlai.
9. Tāntiband.
10. Tārās.

following is a list of the Middle and Primary schools maintained by the District Board :—

| Serial No. | Names of schools. | Serial No. | Names of schools. |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | 40. | Jorpukuria. |
| | *Middle Vernacular school.* | 41. | Ahmedpur. |
| 1. | Udaypur. | 42. | Barat. |
| | | 43. | Ulatchāndipur. |
| | | 44. | Raipur. |
| | *Lower Primary schools.* | 45. | Gopālpur. |
| 2. | Yakubpur. | 46. | Mathurapur. |
| 3. | Simulchara. | 47. | Banabāria. |
| 4. | Malahchi. | 48. | Beraghona. |
| 5. | Lakshipur. | 49. | Chhatiantali. |
| 6. | Krishnaganj. | 50. | Pānchasarutia. |
| 7. | Bahādurpur. | 51. | Sibnātpur. |
| 8. | Babulchara. | 52. | Pashinmgaradaha. |
| 9. | Deārshāhapur. | 53. | Subarnagānti. |
| 10. | Khidirpur. | 54. | Dhukuria. |
| 11. | Naldah. | 55. | Betua. |
| 12. | Khordachāndpur. | 56. | Charjhunkail. |
| 13. | Chartārāpur. | 57. | Barabāria. |
| 14. | Bhawānipur. | 58. | Raiganj. |
| 15. | Charsilimpur. | 59. | Hashil. |
| 16. | Himaitpur. | 60. | Krishnadia. |
| 17. | Chāndpur. | 61. | Barabil. |
| 18. | Charshādipur. | 62. | Nandalalpur. |
| 19. | Billaribāri. | 63. | Durgadaha. |
| 20. | Goswāmirāmpur. | 64 | Sendighalia. |
| 21. | Chandwa. | 65. | Jamirta. |
| 22. | Sadullapur. | 66. | Dugali. |
| 23. | Bhulbāria. | 67. | Dādpur. |
| 24. | Manmathapur. | 68. | Teghari. |
| 25. | Chāmārpur. | 69. | Khās Da ika. |
| 26. | Hariakahan. | 70. | Khās Chāndmetuani. |
| 27. | Huikhāli. | 71. | Khās Dildalpur. |
| 28. | Banagram. | 72. | Dewantārātia. |
| 29. | Paikpāra. | 73. | Rupshi. |
| 30. | Nagdemra. | 74. | Balarāmpur. |
| 31. | Brishabikha. | 75. | Charsamāspur |
| 32. | Chakla. | 76. | Nagrauha. |
| 33. | Dudliakol. | 77. | Rahimpur. |
| 34. | Māshkhāli. | 78. | Udhania. |
| 35. | Boramāra. | 79. | Brahmangaon. |
| 36. | Lakshmipur. | 80. | Jogjibanpur. |
| 37. | Rājnārāyanpur. | 81. | Rasidpur. |
| 38. | Amīnpur. | 82. | Kalupāra. |
| 39. | Dulai. | 83. | Saruppur Boālia. |

| Serial No. | Names of schools. |
|---|---|
| | *Lower Primary schools*—concld. |
| 84. | Bashbāria. |
| 85. | Charkawak. |
| 86. | Chalitadānga. |
| 87. | Simuildair. |
| | *Under construction.* |
| 88. | Char Kāzipur. |
| 89. | Char Pigritekani. |

| Serial No. | Names of schools. |
|---|---|
| | *Pānchāyati Union schools for boys.* |
| 90. | Kadamtali. |
| 91. | Sibpur |
| 92. | Suigrām. |
| 93. | Sultānpur. |
| | *Pānchāyati Union school for girls.* |
| 94. | Sonatala. |

There are altogether 170 pounds under the District Board, which in 1920-21 brought in an income of Rs. 10,715. The mileage of the roads maintained by it is 34 miles of metalled roads and 691 miles of non-metalled roads, besides 253 miles of village roads. The engineering staff consists of the District Engineer, two overseers at Pābna, an overseer at Sirājganj, a sub-overseer at Chātmohar and a sub-overseer at Ullāpāra: there is also a sub-overseer under the Sirājganj Local Board.

The following statement gives details of the ferries under the District Board :—

| Serial No. | Name of ferry. | Name of river, stream, etc. | Annual rent payable by lessee (1921-22). |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | PĀBNA SUBDIVISION. | Rs. |
| 1 | Ariadingi ... | Ariadingi Jola on the 3rd mile of the *Ataikula* Tāntiband road. | 6 |
| 2 | Ataikula ... | Ichhāmati ... ... | 50 |
| 3 | Bājitpur ... | Padma ... ... | 700 |
| 4 | Bānsherabada ... | Bānsherbada Jola on the 9th mile of old Sāra track. | 5 |
| 5 | Barnai ... | Barnai Jola on the 2nd mile of Sujānagar cross road. | 4 |
| 6 | Old Bera ... | Ichhāmati ... ... | 142 |
| 7 | Bhawānipur ... | Ratnai ... ... | 10 |
| 8 | Bhānguria ... | Baral ... ... | 600 |
| 9 | Boysha (Gosaidaha) | Gumāni ... .. | 1,202 |

| Serial No. | Name of ferry. | Name of river, stream, etc. | Annual rent payable by lessee (1921-22). |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Rs. |
| 10 | Chātmohar Nutan Bazar. | Baral ... ... | 331 |
| 11 | Chāndmāri ... | Nāzirpur Jola on the 2nd mile of the old Sara track. | * |
| 12 | Chandwa ... | Chandwa Jola on the last mile of old Sirājganj road. | 4 |
| 13 | Chāndipur ... | Barnai Jola ... ... | 1 |
| 14 | Char Rādhakantapur | Padma ... ... | 470 |
| 15 | Dāsuria ... | Dāsuria Khāl on the 4th mile of the road from Dāsuria to Silimpur. | 6 |
| 16 | Fakīrpur ... | Ichhāmati ... ... | 101 |
| 17 | Idilpur ... | Chiknai ... ... | 160 |
| 18 | Jotgāzi ... | Dāsuria Khāl on the 1st mile of the Silimpur track. | 2 |
| 19 | Kānchādia ... | Padma ... ... | 102 |
| 20 | Mulgrām ... | Chiknai ... ... | 25 |
| 21 | Nischintapur ... | Nischintapur Jola on the 7th mile of the Sātbāria road. | 22 |
| 22 | Poradānga ... | Poradānga Jola on the 14th mile of the road from Tāntiband to Chinakhara. | 143 |
| 23 | Selendah ... | Selendah Jola on the 23rd mile of the old Serājganj road. | * |
| 24 | Sāinthia ... | Ichhāmati river and Sāinthia Jola on the 22nd mile of the new Sirājganj road. | 250 |
| 25 | Sujānagar ... | Barnai Jola on the 3rd mile of the Khalishpur-Sātbāria road. | 112 |
| | | SIRĀJGANJ SUBDIVISION | |
| 1 | Alukdia ... | Ichhāmati ... | 2† |
| 2 | Tengrail ... | Do. ... | |

* Not settled for want of a bidder.
† Settled in one lot.

| Serial No. | Name of ferry. | Name of river, stream, etc. | Annual rent payable by lessee (1921-22). |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Athāradaha ... | Athāradaha Khāl on the 9th mile of the Kaijuri road. | Rs |
| 4 | Chaubāli Bazar ... | Sthal Khāl on the junction of the Belkuchi-Nakālia track. | |
| 5 | Saidpur ... | Athāradaha Khāl on the 36th mile of the new Sirājganj road. | 10* |
| 6 | Sthal Khāl ... | Sthal Khāl on the 11th mile of Kaizuri road. | |
| 7 | Baral ... | Phuljhur ... ... | 77 |
| 8 | Baushia ... | Jamuna ... ... | 6 |
| 9 | Bahuki ... | Ichhāmati ... ... | 275 |
| 10 | Betnāli ... | Betnāli Nullah on the 6th mile of old Bogra road. | 40 |
| 11 | Belkuchi ... | Kunai on old Jamuna ... | 310 |
| 12 | Brahmagācha ... | Ichhāmati ... ... | 50 |
| 13 | Bhuiagānti ... | Phuljhur or Karatoya ... | 695 |
| 14 | Baoitāra ... | Dhānbāndi ... ... | 52 |
| 15 | Berakhola-Bera ... | Hurāsāgar ... ... | 1,625 |
| 16 | Bāramāshia ... | Bāramāshia Jola on the Bāgbāti-Brahmangācha track | ... |
| 17 | Chandrakona ... | Chandrakona Nullah on the 19th mile of the new Bogra road. | 115 |
| 18 | Chandaikona ... | Karatoya ... ... | 730 |
| 19 | Chākipāra Kumrāl ... | Kumrāl Khāl on the 12th mile of the new Bogra road. | 25* |
| 20 | Kumrāl ... | Kumrāl Khāl ... ... | |
| 21 | Charkawak ... | Charkawak Khāl on the 1st mile of the Ullāpāra-Belkuchi road. | 25 |
| 22 | Demra ... ... | Baral ... ... ... | 3 |
| 23 | Dhāngora ... | Jhuljhur or Karatoya ... | 2,325 |
| 24 | Erandaha ... | Ditto ... ... | 1,200 |
| 25 | Ghurka ... | Ditto ... ... | 400 |

* Settled in one lot.

| Serial No. | Name of ferry. | Name of river, stream, etc. | Annual rent payable by lessee (1921-22). |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Rs. |
| 26 | Gangārāmpur ... | Gangārāmpur Jola on the 10th mile of old Bogra road. | 5* |
| 27 | Hashil ... ... | Hashil Nullah on the 11th mile of old Bogra road. | |
| 28 | Lakshmikola ... | Lakshmikola Jola on the 10th mile of old Bogra road. | |
| 29 | Nalua (Bil) ... | Nalua Bil on the 11th mile of old Bogra road. | |
| 30 | Gurkha Khāl ... | Gurkha Khāl on the 14th mile of the new Bogra road. | 8 |
| 31 | Ghatina ... | Phuljhur or Karatoya ... | 427 |
| 32 | Char Jamālpur ... | Ditto ... ... | 40 |
| 33 | Kaijuri ... ... | Hurāsāgar ... ... | 2 |
| 34 | Kāliganja ... | Phuljhur ... ... | 17 |
| 35 | Nabipur-Narina ... | Do ... ... | 350 |
| 36 | Natuarpara Suriber ... | Jamuna channel ... | 40 |
| 37 | Pāngāshi ... | Pāngāshi ... ... | 160 |
| 38 | Ichhāmati ... | Ichhāmati ... ... | † |
| 39 | Panchil ... | Panchil Khāl on the 11th mile of the new Bogra road. | ‡ |
| 40 | Purbadelua ... | Phuljhur channel ... ... | 25 |
| 41 | Rāmkantapur Raotāra | Gohala ... ... | 500 |
| 42 | Saidābād Porabāria ... | Hurāsāgar ... ... | 45 |
| 43 | Srifaltata ... | Jamuna channel ... ... | 60 |
| 44 | Telkupi Khāl ... | Telkupi Khāl ... ... | 2§ |
| 45 | Ullāpāra ... | Phuljhur ... ... | 350 |

* Settled in one lot.
† Subsidiary to Pāngāshi ferry.
‡ Not settled for want of bidders.
§ Not on any road.

LOCAL BOARDS.

There is a Local Board for each subdivision. Hitherto the Sadar Local Board and Sirājganj Local Board have consisted of 12 members each, but the number was raised in 1921 to 18. The Sadar Local Board, as already mentioned, elects seven members of the District Board and nine are elected by the Sirājganj Local Board.

VILLAGE SELF-GOVERNMENT ACT.

The Village Self-Government Act has been extended to the district, but no Union Boards have yet (1921) been constituted. There are, however, four Union Committees under the Local Self-Government Act, viz., Bera, Chātmohar, Shāhzādpur and Ullāpāra.

MUNICIPALITIES.

There are only two municipalities in the district, viz., Pābna and Sirājganj.

Pābna.

Pābna was first constituted a municipality in 1876 and its affairs are administered by a Board of 18 Commissioners, of whom 12 are elected. The area within municipal limits is 5 square miles and is divided into four wards. The number of rate-payers in 1920-21 was 3,911 or 20 per cent. of the population. The municipal income is derived mainly from a tax on persons at the rate of 15 annas per Rs. 100 on the monthly income of rate-payers. Government and other public buildings are assessed at 7½ per cent. of their annual value. Latrine fees are also levied at Rs. 7-13 per cent. or 1 anna 3 pies per rupee on the annual value of holdings. The total income in 1920-21 (excluding the opening balance) was Rs. 32,976 and the average incidence of taxation was only Re. 1-7-6 per head of the population, which is a comparatively low figure. The mileage of the roads in the municipal area is about 32 miles, of which only 6 miles are metalled.

Sirājganj.

The Sirājganj municipality was first established in 1869 and is administered by 18 Municipal Commissioners, of whom two-thirds are elected. It is a large municipality extending over 11½ square miles; there are four wards, and in 1920-21 there were 4,175 rate-payers or 16 per cent. of the total population. The income in the same year was Rs. 28,628 excluding the opening balance, the incidence of taxation being only Re. 0-15-4 per head of the population. It is not surprising that with such low taxation few large works of improvement have been carried out in the town, and that, though it is an important trade centre with many wealthy merchants, the main bazar roads are still unmetalled. The form of taxation in force is the

personal tax, *i.e.*, a tax according to circumstances and property, which is assessed at the rate of Re. 1 per Rs. 100 of the ratepayer's income; as in Pābna and elsewhere, Government and other public buildings are assessed at 7½ per cent. of their annual value. Latrine fees are also levied at the rate of Rs. 7-13 per cent. on the annual value of holdings.

# CHAPTER XII.

## EDUCATION.

LITERACY. A FAIR indication of the extent to which education is diffused is afforded by the census statistics of literacy. The test of literacy is ability both to read and write, with this further qualification that a person is only recorded as literate if he can write a letter to a friend and read the answer to it ; all persons who are unable to do this are entered in the census schedules as illiterate. The total number of persons in the district who came up to the prescribed standard of literacy in 1921 was 91,299, viz., 82,359 males representing 11·7 per cent. of the male population and 8,940 females representing 1 per cent. of the female population. The numbers of those literate in English were 18,575 males and 497 females: one of every 38 of those returned as literate are literate in English. The census figures serve to show how much more advanced the Hindus are than the Muhammadans, for approximately one of every four Hindu males is literate, whereas the proportion among Muhammadans is one of every 15.

In 1920-21 the number of boys at school was 40,863, or 5·6 per cent. of the male population. This proportion was higher than that returned by any other district in the Rājshāhi division except Bogra, where it was 7·5 per cent.

INSPECTING STAFF. The district is included in the charge of the Inspector of Schools, Rājshāhi Division. The district staff consists of two Deputy Inspectors of Schools, one for the Sadar subdivision and the other for the Sirājganj subdivision, and five Sub-Inspectors of Schools, each in charge of a circle. The five circles are Sadar, Dulai, Sirājganj, Shāhzādpur and Ullāpāra. The average number of primary schools for the inspection of which each Sub-Inspector is responsible is 264—a very high figure, reached nowhere else in the Rājshāhi Division, which is justly claimed to be more than a Sub-Inspector can properly manage.

The following table shows the different classes of educational institutions in the district in 1920-21 and the number of students on the rolls on 31st March 1921 :— EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

| Institutions. | Total number. | Number of students. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Male. | Female. |
| Colleges ... ... | 1 | 327 | ... |
| High schools ... ... | 30 | 6,014 | ... |
| Middle English schools ... | 48 | 3,707 | 105 |
| " vernacular " ... | 5 | 191 | 138 |
| Upper primary " ... | 73 | 3,374 | ... |
| Lower " " ... | 1,568 | 25,927 | 12,067 |
| Special " ... | 31 | 1,479 | ... |
| Total public ... | 1,755 | 41,019 | 12,310 |
| Private ... | 3 | 171 | ... |
| Grand total ... | 1,758 | 41,190 | 12,310 |

There is a second grade college at Pābna, known as the Edward College. It was originally a school founded by Babu Gopāl Chandra Lāhiri, who in 1898 added classes teaching up to the entrance or matriculation standard of the Calcutta University. It was at first known as the Pābna Institution and subsequently as the Pābna College; it was given its present name in 1911 in order to commemorate the memory of the late King-Emperor Edward VII. New college and hostel buildings were subsequently added on a site on the bank of the river Ichhāmati with the help of a donation of Rs. 50,000 given by the late Rai Banamāli Rai Bahādur of Tārās and a grant of the same amount from Government. The management of the College is vested in a committee consisting of the District Magistrate (President, *ex-officio*), three nominees of Government, one nominee of the eldest male descendant of the late Rai Banamāli Ray Bahādur (in consideration of his generous donation of Rs. 50,000 to the College), one member elected by other donors and subscribers, the Chairman of the Pābna municipality, *ex-officio*, the Principal of the College (Secretary), *ex-officio*, two members elected by the retiring Governing Body, and two Edward College, Pābna.

members elected by the Professors of the College from among themselves, one from the Arts and the other from the Science Department.

The College teaches the following subjects up to the Intermediate standard in Arts :—English, Bengali, Sanskrit, Persian, Mathematics, Logic, History and Chemistry. The staff consists of a Principal and Professor of English Literature, a Professor of Mathematics, two Professors of Sanskrit, a Professor of History, two Professors of Logic, two Junior Professors of English Literature, a Professor of Chemistry, a Professor of Persian, a Demonstrator of Chemistry and a Librarian.

The tuition fee is Rs. 5 a month : an additional fee of Re. 1 is charged to each of the second year students reading chemistry. The boarding charges amount to about Rs. 10 per mensem. Five per cent. of the students on the rolls are admitted free, besides Government scholars. There are two scholarships of the value of Rs. 8 a month called the Banamāli Jubilee scholarships, after their donor, Rai Banamāli Ray Bahādur of Tārās. They are open to the two best poor students who pass the Matriculation Examination, one from the Pābna Zila School and the other from the Sirājganj High English School, and who fail to obtain a Government scholarship.

High schools.

The following is a statement of the high schools in the district and of the number of pupils on the rolls of each on 31st March 1921 :—

| Names of schools. | Number of pupils on the rolls on the 31st March 1921. |
|---|---|
| *Managed by Government*— | |
| Pābna Zila School ... ... ... | 397 |
| *Aided*— | |
| High English— | |
| Sirājganj B. L. ... ... ... | 475 |
| Ullāpāra ... ... ... | 173 |
| Chaubāri ... ... ... | 119 |
| Shāhzādpur ... ... ... | 227 |
| Porjana ... ... ... | 173 |
| Potājia ... ... ... | 114 |
| Rādhānagar ... ... ... | 144 |
| Total ... | 1,425 |

| Names of schools. | Number of pupils on the rolls on the 31st March 1921. |
|---|---|
| *Unaided*— | |
| High English— | |
| Sirājganj Victoria | 242 |
| Harinabāgbāti | 216 |
| Meghai | 94 |
| Mesra | 48 |
| Salap | 198 |
| Mohanpur | 50 |
| Jāmirsa | 174 |
| Sthal Pakrāsi | 264 |
| Sohāgpur | 206 |
| Daulatpur | 122 |
| Chātmohar | 234 |
| Pābna Institution | 554 |
| Banwārinagar | 313 |
| Sāra Mārwāri | 305 |
| Pābna Victory | 139 |
| Shillai | 114 |
| Bera | 150 |
| Nakālia | 191 |
| Dhopakhola | 172 |
| Khalilpur | 165 |
| Purān Bhārenga | 131 |
| Nutan Bhārenga | 119 |
| Total | 4,192 |

Of the 48 middle English schools 27 are aided and 21 unaided. The want of popularity of middle vernacular schools is apparent from their paucity, there being only five, of which one is maintained by Government and four are aided. One of the middle English schools and one of the middle vernacular schools are girls' schools established in 1920-21. Middle schools

The table already given under the head of educational institutions will have shown that the great majority of the primary schools are of the lower primary status, in which young children are taught. The pānchāyati union scheme, of which the object is to provide each union with a primary school of a good standard, has been in force for some time. Out of 210 pānchāyati unions in the district 87 have been Primary schools.

provided with Board primary schools, while 55 have upper primary schools which serve the purpose of Board primary schools.

Training and other special schools

The special schools include two training schools for primary school teachers, which had 44 students on the rolls on 31st March 1921, and 29 other schools with 1,435 students. The two training schools for primary school teachers, generally known as *guru*-training schools, are situated at Shāhzādpur in the Sirājganj subdivision and at the district headquarters of Pābna. That at Shāhzādpur has 14 teachers under training and that at Pābna 30, of whom 19 are Muhammadans. The latter has a staff of three instructors and has been brought under the scheme for *guru*-training schools of an improved type with effect from 1st July 1920. The establishment of another school of the improved type at Sirājganj has been sanctioned. There are five schools for backward communities (Namasudras, Santāls, Muchis and Dhobis) with 150 pupils.

Private institutions.

The educational returns of the Education Department for 1920-21 shew only five schools of the marginally-noted class. Three have recently come under the head of private institutions, viz., the Rai Daulatpur High School, the Aryan Academy and the Amrita Lal Middle English School (an unrecognised school) in Pābna, which have been converted into private schools in consequence of the non-co-operation movement.

Technical schools.

The chief institution for technical education is the Elliott-Banamāli Technical School at Pābna, which was established in 1892. Its name commemorates its founder, Rai Banamāli Ray Bahādur of Tārās and the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Charles Elliott. It is managed and maintained by the District Board with the help of a Government grant-in-aid. The institution has four departments, viz., apprentice, survey, artisan and B class. In the apprentice department mathematics, surveying, drawing, engineering, mechanics, carpentry and blacksmith's work are taught. In the survey class mathematics, surveying, drawing and engineering are taught, and in the artisan class the boys are trained in carpentry and blacksmith's work together with elementary drawing. In the B class practical instruction is given to boys of the Zila school, Government paying a monthly grant of Rs. 2 for each boy up

to a maximum of Rs. 70. The following shows the classification of pupils in each department in 1921 :—

| | Hindu. | Muhammadan. | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Apprentice ... | 52 | 5 | 59 |
| Survey ... | 17 | 7 | 24 |
| Artisan ... | 10 | 3 | 13 |
| B class ... | 20 | 6 | 26 |
| Total ... | 99 | 23 | 122 |

In addition 136 boys of the Zila school attend the manual training class in batches of about 30 per day. The income from fees amounts to Rs. 144 a month. The staff consists of 9 members., viz., 4 teachers, 1 carpentry instructor, 2 smithy instructors, 1 polisher and 1 clerk and hostel superintendent. The establishment cost is about Rs. 600 a month.

There is also a Government weaving school at Pābna, which was established in 1915 and is affiliated to the Serampore Weaving Institute. The subjects taught are practical weaving, design and analysis of cloth, yarn calculation and drawing. In 1921 the number of pupils receiving instruction was 22, all but one being Muhammadans, the sons of weavers. Twenty stipends are allotted annually for the school. Fourteen fly-shuttle looms are at work, but the outturn is small, averaging 3 yards a day per loom. The school is managed by a committee consisting of 11 members, of whom five are *ex-officio*, viz., the District Magistrate (Chairman), the Vice-Chairman of the District Board (Secretary), the Sadar Subdivisional Officer, the District Deputy Inspector of Schools and the weaving teacher of the school.

A women's industrial school was also established at Pābna in 1913 ; it is managed by missionaries and receives a grant-in-aid from Government. Instruction is given in needle-work, reading, writing and arithmetic, and there were 54 pupils in 1921.

EDUCATION OF MUHAMMADANS.

The following account of the education of Muhammadans has been kindly contributed by Mr. J. A. Taylor, Assistant Director of Public Instruction (Muhammadan Education), Bengal :—

The following extracts from notes written by the Collector of Pābna in 1870 and 1873 shows the position of the Muhammadans at that time :—"The Muhammadans of Pabna are rapidly declining in position, owing for the most part to their conservative habits, which prevent them from studying English, or from progressing in any way beyond the condition of their forefathers and partly also to the jealousy shown towards them by educated Hindus who monopolise all, or nearly all, the Government appointments The leading ryots or cultivators are generally Muhammadans, and they frequently rise to the position of traders, boat-owners, and holders of small estates, their savings being usually spent in building boats or purchasing lands. The sons of principal ryots generally learn to read and write, and some few among them study the Korān. In most of the villages there are houses for praying in which a *mulla* or priest is employed on a salary of one or two rupees per month, with an additional allowance for diet. The pay of the *mulla*, and the cost of building and repairing the houses of prayer, are generally met by local subscriptions, but in some villages mosques are built by the individual wealthy residents. The material condition of the people is not good, the chief cause being the total ignorance and absence of education among the agricultural classes, who are thus placed at the mercy of zamīndāri servants and others, whose interest it is that the ryots should remain in their present state."

As in other parts of Bengal, the Muhammadans of this district, the majority of whom belong to the poor cultivating class, had little or no chance of bettering their position owing to their poverty, their own conservative habits and the jealousy shown towards them by educated Hindus, who took advantage of every opportunity for getting education and tried to keep Moslems from the schools. Muhammadan parents, however, sent their children to the village mosques or prayer-houses to learn the Korān with the *mullas* and a very few of them, who were farsighted, and who could afford to pay, sent their children to English and vernacular schools.

The following figures taken from the educational statistics for the year 1870-71 show the then position of Muhammadans in the schools :—

| Classes of schools | | Number of schools. | Number of pupils. | Number of Muhammadan pupils. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Government English | ... | 1 | 167 | 1 |
| " vernacular | ... | 2 | 91 | 9 |
| Normal ... | ... | 1 | 75 | 1 |
| Aided English ... | ... | 15 | 585 | 20 |
| " vernacular | ... | 43 | 1,783 | 234 |
| " girls' ... | ... | 3 | 74 | 5 |
| Total | ... | 65 | 2,775 | 297 |

The figures disclose the fact that though the Muhammadans predominated in the district population, the pupils attending schools of various kinds numbered only 297 or 10·7 per cent. Such was the position of Muhammadans in respect of education 50 years ago.

A great extension of primary education took place under the reforms introduced by Sir George Campbell in 1872-73. On the 31st March 1875 there were 220 aided vernacular schools of the lower class attended by 6,886 pupils. The total number of Government and aided schools was 276, attended by 9,701 pupils, of whom 3,525 or more than one-third were Muhammadans. This was satisfactory, but it may be noted that the bulk of the pupils belonged to the lowest or infant stage.

The first institution for the teaching of English started by Government in the district was the Pābna Zila School. It was established in 1853 as a Government English school. The Hindus, quick to perceive the great advantage which a knowledge of English literature and science would give them, eagerly availed themselves of the opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of western subjects taught in the Government institution, and also started schools of their own on similar lines, receiving aid from Government for their maintenance. The Muhammadans, for reasons given in a previous paragraph, lagged behind. A well-known official summed up the position thus—" Whilst the Hindus were showing readiness,

zeal and generosity towards the spread of English education, far different were the feelings of the Musalmāns, whose attitude towards English education was anything but friendly." Having a leaning towards Arabic learning and being followers of traditional maxims and principles, Muhammadans sent their children to the Dacca, Calcutta and Hooghly Madrasas and started and maintained a senior Madrasa of their own at Sirājganj. But in western education they took little or no part. Government viewed their backward condition with sympathy and tried to help and encourage them. Two special Assistant Inspectors of Schools for Muhammadan Education, the late Khān Bahādur Maulvi Muhammad Ibrahim and Maulvi Abdul Karim, were appointed by Government between 1890—1900 to try and show the members of their community the benefits of western education and to watch over the interests of Muhammadan schools and scholars. They did much for the community in the Province, and the Muhammadans of Pābna also benefited from their endeavours. As a result Muhammadans developed some taste for western learning, but progress was slow. The district could boast of only three graduates up to 1905, viz., Maulvi Mofukhharul Islām, B.L., Maulvi Muhammad Irfānulla, B.L., and Khān Bahādur Maulvi Wasimuddin Ahmad, B.L.

In 1905, the year of the Partition of Bengal, they suddenly awoke to a sense of their duty, interest and responsibility. This administrative change was more effective in stirring up the community than the multifarious strenuous efforts of half a century, and another contributing factor was the appointment of a Muhammadan gentleman as District and Sessions Judge, who was ready to help them whenever they approached him. They became enthusiastic, started secondary and primary schools, and began to send their children to high and middle schools in large numbers. Preachers toured the district urging people to take to modern education and in the course of a few years progress was most marked. Before the Partition there was not a single Muhammadan from this district in the superior services. At present there are two Deputy Magistrates, three Deputy Inspectors of Schools, and several Kānungos, Sub-Inspectors of Police and Schools and some clerks in the Secretariat, and there are also several legal and medical practitioners.

The following figures show the position of the Muhammadans of Pābna in respect of education before the Partition and the progress they made during the decade 1904 to 1914 :—

| Classes of schools. | 1904-05. | | | 1914-15. | | | Increase or decrease of Muhammadan pupils. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. of schools. | Total strength. | No. of Muhammadans. | No. of schools. | Total strength. | No. of Muhammadans. | |
| High English ... ... | 20 | 3,680 | 771 | 20 | 6,609 | 2,388 | + 1,617 |
| Middle ,, ... ... | 32 | 2,467 | 833 | 46 | 4,828 | 2,153 | + 1,320 |
| ,, vernacular ... | 15 | 717 | 249 | 7 | 518 | 151 | - 98 |
| Upper primary ... | 129 | 5,843 | 3.415 | 107 | 5,431 | 3,068 | - 387 |
| Lower ,, ... ... | 442 | 10,725 | 7,099 | 779 | 23,635 | 17,646 | +10,547 |
| Special { Training ... | 2 | 12 | 10 | 2 | 24 | 16 | + 6 |
| Special { Industrial ... | 1 | 108 | 13 | 1 | 108 | 27 | + 14 |
| Special { Other ... | 13 | 580 | 517 | 14 | 720 | 602 | + 85 |
| Total public | 654 | 24,132 | 12,947 | 976 | 41,873 | 26,051 | +13,104 |
| Private ... | 7 | 141 | 141 | 28 | 968 | 710 | + 569 |
| GRAND TOTAL ... | 661 | 24,273 | 13,088 | 1,004 | 42,841 | 26,761 | +13,673 |

It may be observed, however, that though the rate of progress has been remarkable, Muhammadans are not even now on an equal footing with Hindus in political, professional or industrial life. The European war in no small degree affected their economic condition and the recent non-co-operation movement has worked to their disadvantage.

According to the census of 1921, Muhammadans represent 1,053,571 or 76 of the total population. The number of Muhammadans under instruction both in public and private schools, excluding the Pābna College, was returned at 36,207 on the 31st March 1921, and the percentage of Muhammadan pupils to the Muhammadan population of school-going age was 22·5. In the high stage they represented 4·1 per cent., in the middle stage 4·3 and in the primary stage 88·2 per cent.

Among the students on the rolls of the Pābna College there are 98 Muhammadans. In high schools on the 31st March 1921 there were 1,774 Muhammadan pupils, in middle English 1,414 and in middle vernacular 81 : the corresponding figures for the previous year were 2,661, 1,648 and 89, respectively, so that

Collegiate and secondary education

there has been a net loss of 1,129 pupils. The causes for this decrease are more economic than political, but there is no doubt that the non-co-operation movement lent intensity to the force of the causes already at work. The bulk of the Muhammadan pupils come from the cultivating and weaving classes, and these have felt economic difficulties more than others; and owing to the influence of the Khilāfat agitators there has grown up a bitterness of feeling among Muhammadans against the British people and British institutions.

There are three high and one middle English schools in the district managed by Muhammadans, viz., the Chaubāri Islamia High English, the Meghal High English, the Daulatpur High English and the Gandhail Middle English, which have been seriously affected by economic difficulties and by the non-co-operation movement.

rimary lucation.

In primary education Muhammadans hold their own. *Maktabs* flourish both in number and in attendance, the education imparted by them being congenial to the taste of the people.

adrasas.

There are altogether 18 Madrasas in the district, viz., one senior, 7 junior of the reformed type and 10 which follow the old course. The number of pupils attending these institutions rose from 1,141 to 1,251 during the year ending 31st March 1921. The total direct expenditure incurred during the year for the maintenance of the Madrasas was Rs. 25,485, of which Rs. 8,134 came from Provincial revenues, Rs. 2,247 from the District fund and the rest from private sources.

The Sirājganj Senior Madrasa was established in 1892, with the object of imparting religious education to Moslems. It started with about 100 pupils. The founders of the institution were Hāji Khairulla and Maulāna Abdul Bāri. It followed the old course (known as Nizāmia) based on the traditional courses of the Madrasas of Bāgdā l and was affiliated to the Calcutta Madrasa. The reformed course was introduced in 1915. The Madrasa has hitherto been accommodated in a corrugated iron-roofed and mat-walled house, located in the congested portion of the town. The site and the accommodation have been the subject of criticism from all visitors—from His Excellency the Governor down to inspecting officers of lower rank, but the difficulty has at last been removed. A suitable site has been acquired for the Madrasa at a cost of Rs. 5,643 and a masonry

building is under construction. The estimated cost of the building is Rs. 22,785, towards which a capital grant of Rs. 20,000 has been received from Government. There are now 190 boys on the rolls, 33 in the old senior section (2nd, 3rd and 4th-year classes) and the rest in classes IX to I under the new scheme. The staff consists of 14 members, viz., the Superintendent, 6 Arabic teachers, 5 English teachers and 2 vernacular teachers.

The total establishment cost is Rs. 736 a month. This is met from fees, averaging Rs. 243, a Government grant of Rs. 350, a municipal grant of Rs. 5, and the rest from public subscriptions.

Rādhānagar.
Sambhudia
Enayetpur.
Salanga.
China Dhākuria.
Khaschar Jamālpur.
Dhāngora.

The marginal statement shows the junior Madrasas of the reformed type, which are in receipt of aid from the Education Department. Two of these are not very successful, but the other five institutions are doing well. They are well-housed, fairly well equipped and staffed with qualified teachers. There is a tendency to convert some of the old type Madrasas into those of the reformed type, but progress is not rapid. The average cost of the maintenance of a junior Madrasa of the old type is Rs. 40 a month and the average minimum scale for a junior Madrasa of the new type is Rs. 125; even with the Government grant of Rs. 62, the new type of Madrasa costs the people themeslves 33 per cent. more than the Madrasa of the old type.

Education of girls.

Of the total number of 12,310 girls under instruction as returned on the 31st March 1921, Muhammadan girls numbered 9,289, all in the primary stage.

Inspecting officers and teachers.

Both the Deputy Inspectors and four of the Sub-Inspectors in 1921 were Muhammadans. In high English schools there are 105 Moslem teachers out of 378, in middle English 127 out of 267 and in middle vernacular 7 out of 14. In the Government High School there are five Moslems (including two Maulvis) out of 18.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### GAZETTEER.

**Bera.**—A village in the Mathura thāna, Sadar subdivision, situated at the junction of the Ichhāmati, Baral and Hurāsāgar rivers. With its constituent villages and *pārās* or hamlets (*e.g.*, Beragola, Bera-grām, Bangrām, Doreta-Bera, Kāgmāripāra and Shalima) it has a population of several thousands. It is an important local market with a considerable trade in jute and contains a jute press of Landale & Clark, Limited. It also contains a police-station, a sub-registry office and a small dispensary. As stated in Chapter X, it was at one time proposed to make Bera the headquarters of a subdivision comprising the south-eastern part of the district, but the idea was abandoned owing to its distance from the railway.

**Chatmohar.**—Village in the west of the Sadar subdivsion, situated on the river Baral, 19 miles north of Pābna. It is the headquarters of a thāna and contains a charitable dispensary, sub-registry office, high school and post and telegraph office; there is a railway station on the line to Sirājanj a short distance to the south. There is an old mosque with an inscription showing that it was built in the year 1581 A.D. The translation of the inscription given in Blochmann's *Ain-i-Akbari* (Vol. I, p. 621) runs :—"This lofty mosque was built during the time of the great Sultan, the chief of Sayyids, Abul Fath Muhammad Masūm Khān—May God perpetuate his kingdom for ever, O Lord, O Thou who remainest!—by the high and exalted Khān, Khān Muhammad, son of Tūi Muhammad Khān Qāqshāl, in the year 989."

Qāqshāl is the name of a Turkish clan which had received extensive *jāgirs* in North Bengal, particularly Dinājpur. They joined in the great rebellion that broke out in Jaunpur, Bengal and Bihar against Akbar in 1579 in consequence of the resentment of the Muhammadan nobles at having their revenue-free grants withdrawn and also at the hostility now shown by Akbar to the religion of Islām. In this rebellion Masūm Khān and the Qāqshāls were prominent, so much so that Masūm Khān was known to the Muhammadan historians

as Masūm Khān-i-Asi, *i.e.*, the rebel; he is generally known by the suffix Kābuli, but appears to have been a Turbati, *i.e.*, a member of a tribe of Khorāsān. He was a nephew of the Vizier of Humayun, distinguished himself in the war against the Afghān chiefs and was promoted to the rank of Commander of One Thousand for bravery shown in a fight in which the notorious Kāla Pahār was killed.

When the rebellion broke out, Masūm Khān became one of its chief leaders. The Governor of Bengal, Muzaffar Khān, was killed at Tānda, where he had taken refuge; and Todar Mal, who was sent by Akbar to quell the rising, was unable to face the army of Masūm Khān and the Qāqshāls, which numbered 30,000, and had to shut himself up in the fort of Monghyr. The Qāqshāls, however, having been gained over by the Imperialists, left Masūm Khān, and the rebel army dispersed. Subsequently, Masūm Khān reappeared with a fresh army, which he had raised in Bhāti, *i.e.*, the country along the Brahmaputra and the Meghna and in the Sundarbans, and plundered Western Bengal. He was, however, forced to fall back before the Imperialist forces and fled to Bhāti, where he found shelter with Isa Khān and at length died in 1599 A.D. after long fighting near Sonārgāon and Bhawāl. As the inscription quoted above shows, he had the audacity to assume royal prerogatives.*

According to tradition, Masūm Khān, who is also called locally Maddam Khān, excavated a large tank at Chātmohar and had his palace to the north of it on a spot bounded on the north by the Baral, on the south by the Atrai and on the west by a large tank, while his troops were stationed in the quarter called after them Pathānpāra. The presence of stone blocks with images of Hindu deities carved on the reverse shows that a Hindu shrine (or shrines) was demolished to afford material for the mosque.

**Handial.**—A village in the north-west of the Chātmohar thana. It is a place of some antiquity containing a temple of Jagannāth, an inscription on which shows that it was repaired by one Bhawāni Dās in the Saka year 1512, *i.e.*, 1590 A.D. It was once a prosperous trade mârt, which is mentioned under the spelling of Hurrial in Hamilton's *East India Gazetteer* (1828) as one of the three chief towns of Rājshāhi, which, it is said, " used to produce four-fifths of all the silk, raw or manufactured, used in or exported from Hindustan." The following account is given of it :—" A commercial mart where the East

* Blochmann, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, pp. 189, 326, 342, 343, 351, 431.

India Company has long had an established factory for th purchasing of silk and cotton goods. This commercial residency has for some time past been incorporated with that of Comercolly" (the modern Kumārkhāli in Nadia district). It appears to have lost its prosperity owing to fluvial changes, but was the headquarters of a thāna at least as late as 1845.

**Hardinge bridge.**—This bridge carries the main line of the Eastern Bengal Railway over the Padma at a point south of Pāksi, where the river is over one mile in width. It was completed in 1915 during the viceroyalty of Lord Hardinge after whom it is named. With a length of 5,900 feet and 15 spans of 350 feet each, it is one of the longest bridges in the world and its construction was a great feat of engineering. The wells carrying the piers had to be sunk to an exceptional depth (150 feet) to ensure its stability, built as it is over a treacherous sandy river bed. Training works had to be constructed along the banks of the Padma to keep the river in its channel, for there is a volume of 2½ million cubic feet of water passing under the bridge at high flood and a variation of 30 feet between lowest and highest water-level.

**Hati Kumrail.**—A village in thana Ullāpāra, which contains an interesting archæological structure. This is a high *Dolmancha*, consisting of a raised platform with a brick arch over it, from which was suspended a throne for the god Krishna and his consort Radha at the time of the *Doljātra*. The arch was damaged and partially sunk during the earthquake of 1897.

**Pabna.**—Headquarters of the district situated on the river Ichhāmati, which flows through the town. The area within municipal limits is five square miles and the population, which was 19,274 in 1911, was 19,343 according to the census of 1921. It depends for its water-supply on the river Ichhāmati, five municipal reserved tanks and private wells. The Ichhāmati is a dying river, which in the hot weather is reduced to a series of shallow pools of water: the tanks are fed from the river Padma, with which they are connected by open water-courses. There are 39 miles of roads in the municipal area, nine of which are *pucka*, the rest being *kutcha*, and one market, which is private property. Refuse is disposed of in a trenching-ground, nearly 4½ *bighas* in area, outside the municipality. There are four municipal burial-grounds and a burning-*ghāt* on the bank of the Padma. The town is connected by a metalled road with Bājitpur, a village two miles away on the Padma, in which there are a steamer station and some rice mills.

The town contains the usual public offices of a district headquarters and also a Town Hall. The chief educational institutions are the Edward College, the Pābna Zila School, the Elliott-Banamāli Technical School and the Government Weaving School, of which an account will be found in Chapter XII. Archæologically the most interesting building is a Hindu temple, called Jor Bangla, to the north-east of the town. The name is due to the shape of the shrine, which resembles two houses joined together. It is made of brick, with fine brick carvings in front. The plinth is now only about 2 feet from the ground, but was formerly much higher, the building having sunk some feet during the earthquake of 1897. It is said to have been built by one Brajamohan Krori, a *tahsildār* under the Nawāb of Bengal, about the middle of the eighteenth century. The tradition is that he was a millionaire, whence his name, and acquired vast wealth at the expense of the Nawāb. Having failed in his remittances of revenue, the Nawāb sent a detachment to arrest him, whereupon the Krori threw his treasure into a tank to the north of the temple and to escape dishonour drowned himself and his family in it. Traces of a small brick-built house, which is said to have been his residence, are visible about 10 yards to the east of the temple.

Of recent years the erosion of the town by the Padma has been a serious problem. About 200 years ago Pābna was on the bank of the Ganges, but gradually the offtake of the Ichhāmati silted up, and a high sandy *char* formed at its mouth, which was gradually inhabited by an agricultural population. On this *char* land a factory was erected by an indigo planter opposite the court buildings; when it ceased to be used as a factory, it was converted into the Collector's residence. To the south of this a zamīndār subsequently built a *pucka* house which was purchased by Government and converted into a Circuit House shortly before 1916: it is still known locally as Bāgchi's house. The only other buildings of importance on this land are the residence of the Superintendent of Police constructed in 1913, the bonded warehouse and *guru*-training school, which were erected subsequently.

Before 1916 the tortuous Ichhāmati took off from the Ganges near the steamer ghāt at Bājitpur, 2 miles from the civil station. From a survey made in 1912, it was found that the north bank of the Ganges was over half a mile from the Circuit House on the bank of the Ichhāmati. In the rainy season of 1916 the river started cutting its left bank from the

steamer ghāt at Bājitpur and eroded inland for over 1½ miles. The erosion was severe during the floods of 1917, so much so that in one month the whole of the *char* land, half a mile wide, near the Circuit House, was carried away, and the Circuit House had to be dismantled, as the river reached one corner of the building. The erosion wae again rapid during the floods of 1918, but was not so severe as in the previous year.

During the floods of 1919 the situation was carefully surveyed by the Public Works Department. The extent of the erosion had a very serious effect on the *basti* on the *char* land in villages Sādhupara and Rāmchandrapur, as the soil consisted of almost loose sand. A solid block of a very hard soil was found at and above the steamer ghāt at Bājitpur, which resisted the erosion considerably. It was then decided to revet a length of 1,650 feet along the bank down to the Collector's residence, to which the river had approached. This revetment, which stretched from near Tafazzul Husain's house down to the road to the Ganges above the old Collector's residence, was constructed in 1920, before the river rose, at a cost of nearly Rs. 2 lakhs. In August 1920 the erosion became stronger and the greater portion of the mattresses slipped into the river and were carried away. Though the revetment was very badly damaged, and the repairs done during the rains were also of little service, it checked the erosion to a very large extent during the floods, but some erosion took place in the unprotected bank above and below the revetment. Next year (1921) repairs to the revetment were completed before the floods at a cost of Rs. 1,19,000 : the repairs to the old revetment partly slipped during the floods of 1921 and repairs were again carried out. An extension of the revetment lower down for 900 feet, in order to protect the Collector's residence (the old Nil Kuthi), was also finished before the floods of 1921, at a cost of Rs. 78,000 : this extension was not materially damaged during the flood of 1921.

There is an embankment with sluice gates, about a mile in length, along the right bank of the Ichhāmati, which was constructed after the floods of 1890 to protect the town from being inundated by that river when in high flood.

**Potajia.**—Village in thana Shāhzādpur, situated about 2 miles south-west of Shāhzādpur. It contains a high school and an old Hindu temple, now ruinous, which is known as Nabaratna. Tradition relates that one of the Mughal Nawābs, who was passing by Potājia on his way from Murshidābād to Dacca, ordered it to be demolished, and the two top stories

were pulled down. This may be connected with the orders issued by the emperor Shāh Jahān in 1632 and subsequently reissued by Aurangzeb that all Hindu temples which had recently been erected should be demolished.

**Sara.**—Village in the headquarters subdivision situated on the north bank of the Ganges (Padma). It was formerly the terminus of the northern section of the Eastern Bengal Railway and was connected by a service of ferry steamers with Damukdia on the south bank of the river. Passengers proceeding to Calcutta were here transferred to the ferry steamers, but this break in the journey has ceased since the opening of the Hardinge bridge. It contains a police-station, high school and post and telegraph office.

**Shahzadpur.**—Village in the south of the Sirājganj subdivision, situated 7 miles south of the Sāra-Sirājganj Railway, with which it is connected by the old Pābna-Sirājganj road. It is a place of some antiquity with influential residents, both Hindu and Muhammadan, and contains several large zamīndārs' cutcherries. It is the headquarters of a Deputy Magistrate, who has jurisdiction over the Mathura thāna, and a local bench of Honorary Magistrates is held in it. It is also the headquarters of an Inspector of Police and contains a charitable dispensary, a sub-registry office, a public library and several schools, including a *guru*-training school. It was the seat of a Munsif's Court for many years until 1894, when the building was burnt down and the Court was removed to Sirājganj.

An interesting account of its history and monuments is given by Maulavi Abdul Wali in an article *On the Antiquity and Traditions of Shāhzādpur*, which was published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Part I, No. 3, 1904 :—

"Shāhzādpur, the headquarters of a thāna and till lately of a Munsifi, is situated on the south centre of the great jute-producing subdivision of Sirājganj, which forms the northern half of the district of Pābna. Shāhzādpur is famous for a superb Masjid, the *mazārs* of Makhdūm Shāh Daula 'Shahid' and other Muhammadans, and an annual fair. There is no written account of the early colonists. The deeds and papers are said to have suffered loss on account of the climate, fire, or carelessness.

"*The traditions.*—Hazrat Muāzz-ibn-Jabl, the King of Yaman in Arabia, and a companion of the prophet, had two sons and a daughter. One of these two Shāhzādas (princes) Makhdūm Shāh Daula, with the permission of his father, left his native

land on a religious expedition, for the spread of Islām, consisting of three of his nephews (sister's sons)—Khwāja Kalān Dānishmand, Khwāja Nūr, and Khwāja Anwar, his sister, twelve renowned Darvishes, and a large number of followers. They sailed in ships, 7 or 40 in number, on their expedition. Arriving at Bokhāra, Shah Jalālud-Din Bokhāri, a saint of the place, welcomed the pilgrims, and presented a few ash-coloured (*khāki*) pigeons to the Makhdūm Sāhib. After a long and circuitous voyage, the missionaries arrived at a place, now called Potājia, two miles south of Shāhzādpur. The whole country at that time was under water and appeared as a vast ocean. The ships struck on a sandy bed, and consequently the expedition could not proceed up. The Bokhāra pigeons used, as usual, to leave the ships in the morning and return to them by the evening-tide. After a few days' halt, the people on board noticed in the feet of the birds fresh clay and sand. On the following day a *dinghi* (boat) was sent towards the flight of the birds, and a newly forming *char*, subsequently named Shāhzādpur, was discovered. The ships being disentangled and removed, the party landed upon the *char* land. Little by little when the water subsided, the little *char* was transformed into an extensive one. On this spot, to commemmorate the landing, a mosque was built by order of the Makhdūm Sāhib.

" At that time, the country was under the Hindu Raja of Suba-i-Bihār, who would not allow a foreign colony to be established in his dominion, and sent a large army to drive the colonists away. Then ensued a life-and-death struggle between the little band of foreign Muslims on one side, and the vast army of the native king on the other. Three bloody battles were fought, in two of which the devoted followers of the Makhdūm Sāhib were victorious. In the third, the saintly prince was killed. Two of his nephews, the Darvishes, as well as a large number of his followers, were killed by stratagem in one or other of these battles. The lady who was the sister of the Makhdūm Sāhib preferred death to dishonour, and is believed to have thrown herself into a water-pool and perished.

" A soldier of the enemy, who was concealed, cut off the head of the saint while the latter was deeply engaged in saying his afternoon (*asr*) *namāz*. The man left at once with the head for the Raja of Suba-i-Bihār. The head being placed before the king, the latter perceiving in it celestial radiance and supernatural calm became very much astonished and intensely sorry and ashamed at the conduct of the soldier. Having

summoned the leading Musalmāns of Bihār, the head was buried with due solemnity and a *masjid* constructed over the brick-tomb. A fair is held every year near the place ever since. At Shāhzādpur, on the other hand, the headless body was deposited in a stone-coffin, and buried by the surviving nephew, Khwāja Shāh Nūr, and his other followers about ten *rasis* to the south of the mosque.

"*The tombs.*—As stated above, there fell in the struggle a large number of the Muslims. The shrine of the Makhdūm Sāhib 'Shahid' (the Martyr) being in a low-lying tract at some distance from the mosque, those who used to go there to perform *ziyārat* had to suffer discomfort or were exposed to danger in wading their way through marshes in the rains and on account of the snakes. The saint appeared to one of the faithful and directed the coffin to be removed. Accordingly it was buried by the side of the mosque. The tombs or graveyards are all on the south of the *masjid*. Besides the shrine of the Makhdūm Sāhib and his nephews, there exist 18 other tombs, viz., the tombs of the 12 Darvishes, named—(1) Shamsud-Dīn Tabrīzi, (2) Shāh Yusuf, (3) Shāh Khengawār, (4) Shāh Azmat, (5) Hasila-pīr, (6) Shāh Bodla, (7) Shāh Ahmad, (8) Shāh Mahmūd. The names of the other four are not remembered. The names of six other *aulya*, who settled and died subsequently, are—(13) Shāh Mastān, (14) Shāh Habibullah, (15) Shāh Madār, (16) Hādi Sāhib. The names of the other two are not known."

In connection with the tomb of Shāh Mastān, Maulvi Abdul Wali mentions a curious phenomenon: "Sometimes in the dark night, it is said, a column of light, brighter far than the electricity, is seen ascending up from the *astāna* of Shāh Mastān towards the sky, which phenomenon lasts a few minutes."

"The shrine of Khwāja Kālan Dānishmand is to the right side of that of the Makhdūm Sāhib the 'Martyr,' and the shrines of his other nephews and of the Darvishes are hard-by. The shrines of Makhdūm Sāhib, Khwāja Kalān Dānishmand, and Darvish Shāh Yūsuf are enclosed with walls; and lately a corrugated iron roof of octagonal shape has been put over them. Shamsud-Dīn Tabrīzi was Makhdūm Sāhib's teacher. His tomb is enclosed with walls (4′ 6″ high). Shah Yūsuf was a companion (*ashāb*). Out of the *Wakf* estate, a few acres are set apart for the expenses of lighting the *astāna* of Shāh Khengsawār and for looking after it. This is done by a paid

servant. Hindus and Musalmāns make offerings to Darvish Shāh Habībullah's shrine.

"There are two *ganj-i-shāhidān* (literally 'mart of martyrs,' *i.e.*, two large pits, where a large number of martyrs were buried), besides the above tombs:—(1) by the side of the mosque, where respectable persons were interned, and (2) some ten *rasis* to the south of the mosque, where soldiers were buried, and where Makhdūm Sāhib himself was buried at first. The tombs have no inscriptions. The little water-pool, where the Makhdūm Sāhib's sister perished, is called Sati Bībīr Khāl (or the watery grave of the virgin lady). It lay close to the mosque. Pilgrims used to throw sugar and *batāsa*, etc., into it to have their desires fulfilled. Owing to the encroachment of the river, the identical spot where the virgin was drowned cannot be ascertained. Consequently the practice of throwing sweetmeats has of late ceased.

"*The place and the population.*—The place is called Shāhzādpur, after the title of Hazrat Makhdūm Sāhib, who was the Shāhzāda of Yaman. The Pargana Yūsufshāhi, in which is situated Shāhzādpur, is called so, after the name of the Makhdūm Sāhib's companion Yūsuf Shāh." In this connetion the author quotes from the account of the Pābna district given in the *Statistical Account of Bengal*, Volume IX, 1876:—"Most of the mahāls (revenue-free estates) situated in Sirājganj are small and many of them are reported to be connected with the history of the Makhdūm Sāhib, whose cubit was the unit of measurement in Pargana Yūsufshāhi, until the zamīndārs introduced short measures there."

"The population of the place is about ten thousand souls. The Muhammadans are half as much again as the Hindus. Of the three nephews of the Makdūm Sāhib, Khwāja Kalān Dānishmand was not married, and Khwāja Anwar died childless. Khwāja Nur, the only surviving nephew of the Makhdūm Sāhib, married a Muhammadan princess of Sonārgāon. Their descendants are the present Mutawallis. With the Sonārgāon princess came a large number of persons, both Hindus and Muslims, who with the old survivals re-established the colony. The present inhabitants of Shāhzādpur are supposed to be their descendants. Shāhzādpur is divided into fourteen *mahallas* or sections, according to the origin, profession, rank, etc., of the emigrants from Sonārgāon. The following are the mahallas:—(1) Haidarābād, (2) Kandahāri-pāra, (3) Pathān-pāra, (4) Mihtar-pāra, (5) Mughalhātta,

(6) Kāghazi-tola, (7) Kāzi-pāra, (8) Mulla-pāra, (9) Chunia-khāli-pāra, (10) Katgar-pāra, (11) Mutia-pāra, (12) Dhari-pāra, (13) Char-pāra, (14) Andhār-kotha. The place whence earth was dug, and in which lime was deposited, for the construction of the buildings, is called Chunia-Khāli, and the *pāra* Chuniakhāli-pāra (or lime-tank-quarter). There was a jail or house of correction, where criminals used to be imprisoned, and so called "Andhār-kotha or Black Hole." Its traces can still be seen. From it the quarter takes its name.

"*The mosque.*—Area of the interior: Length 51 feet 9 inches, breadth 31 feet 5 inches, height 16 feet 2 inches. Area of the exterior: Length 62 feet 9 inches, breadth 41 feet 3½ inches, height 19 feet 10 inches. The wall is 5 feet 7 inches thick. There are five door-ways, each measuring 7 feet 5 inches in height by 6 feet ½ inch in breadth. The utmost height of the domes (15 in number) from the floor of the temple is 20 feet 9 inches. The mosque is built of bricks and lime of cowries. The edifice is supported by 28 pillars of black basalt, one of which is a little dissimilar from others in colour. It is pressed, contrary to the Islamic Law, by women to their bosom, praying for the birth of children. Their vows, it is supposed, are fulfilled. Attached to the western inner wall of the *masjid*, on a platform, measuring 6 feet 10 inches in length, 5 feet 6 inches in breadth and 6 feet 8 inches in height, is constructed the *mimbar* or pulpit, 5 feet 2 inches high, having the same length and breadth as the platform beneath. An arched staircase, with seven steps, is so constructed as to touch the pulpit. There is a brick *āngna* or platform in front of the temple. The floor of the latter is higher than that of the former by one inch. On both sides of the platform, north and south, walls have been built, having an underground base of 4 feet 6 inches. The jambs of the doors are constructed of black basalt. Over the pulpit, and on the outer walls of the temple, are sculptured beautiful arabesques, consisting of foliage, fruits and other parts of the plant. Lengthwise on both sides of the walls there are half a dozen small false panellings made in plaster.

"*The Waqf Estate.*—The Shāhzādpur mosque is endowed with 722 *bighas* of rent-free lands held direct from Government by trustees or *mutawallis* who are descended, as stated above, from Khwāja Shāh Nur and the Sonārgāon princess. Of these lands only 15 *khadas* are set apart for the service of the temple. The remaining lands were given away to the original

settlers, many of whose descendants still enjoy *lākhirāj*, *madad-i-māsh* and other kinds of tenures.

"*The fair.*—A *melā* or fair is held every year, close to the *masjid*, from the end of Chait to the beginning of Baisākh (April-May) which lasts for about a month. It is visited by Hindus and Muhammadans from far and near. The offerings consist of rice, fowls, sugar and sweets, also pice for the *chirāghi*, for the fulfilment of their desires. The *melā* is visited by about seven thousand people. The species of the Bokhāra pigeons, given by Shah Jalālud-Dīn Bokhāri, and called after him Jalāli *kabutar*, still survive, and can be seen in the precincts of the Shāhzādpur mosque as well as in the neighbouring villages.

"Shāhzādpur of the present is not in many respects the Shāhzādpur of the past. Yet it tells the tales of a distant and dismal past—by its mosque and tombs. The site of a bloody battle-field is indicated by the promiscuously buried remains of the martyrs. Despite its reclaimed marshes and dried-up swamps, we can reasonably picture a time when the place was an alluvial formation, fit for a petty trading colony."

Maulavi Abdul Wali ends his article by explaining that the names of the Makhdūm Sāhib and of his nephews show that "they must have been born in Iran, or Turan: they were rather known by their sobriquets than by their proper names." His conclusion as to the date of Makhdūm Sāhib is that he came to, and settled in, Bengal in the sixth century of the Hijri—about the time of Muhammad Bakhtyār Khilji's conquest of Lakhnauti in 600 H. or 1203 A. D. He adds:—"It is a significant fact that most of the saints of the time who came to India were from the Empire of Bokhāra, that is, Tūrkistān or Central Asia, and were originally Arabs and entitled 'Khwāja.' His settlings at Yūsufshāhi may be said to synchronise with the conquest of Bengal by the Khilji general, Muhammad Bakhtyār."

**Sirajganj.**—Headquarters of the Sirājganj subdivision, situated on the bank of the Jamuna. The river Dhānbāndi passes through the town and is spanned by a bridge of 120 feet in one span. The foundation stone was laid by Sir Charles Elliott, then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, after whom it is called the Elliott bridge. The bridge was completed in 1893 at a cost of Rs. 45,000, which was met by local subscriptions amounting to Rs. 30,000 and a donation of Rs. 15,000, contributed by the Pābna District Board. The earthquake of 1897

damaged the abutments, which sunk a little. The river has largely silted up and in the dry season consists of a number of pools of water.

Sirājganj is referred to in Hamilton's *East India Gazetteer* (1828) as "a considerable commercial mart. It appears to have arisen since Major Rennell's survey in 1784 and is the greatest place of trade in this corner of Bengal." It became a subdivisional headquarters in 1845, the first Subdivisional Officer being a Deputy Magistrate named Barry. He was in charge during the Mutiny of 1857, when he fortified his house and with the help of a small gunboat on the river was ready to meet any attack. Mr. Barry established one of the first jute presses at Sirājganj. He resigned Government service to open a general commission business and to work a hand screw which he had constructed for pressing jute into bales for export. On his return to Europe (where he eventually became M. P. for Cork), he sold the good-will of his business to a company for spinning and weaving jute, which he promoted. This company went into liquidation in 1867, there being no funds to complete the building of the factory. A new company, called the Sirājganj Jute Co. (Limited), purchased for Rs. 1,65,000 the works, which had originally cost Rs. 7,80,000, completed their construction and opened the factory in 1869. The buildings were shattered by the earthquake of 1897, after which the company, the agents of which at that time were Andrew Yule & Co., removed its business. The site was sold to Babu Hem Chandra Chaudhuri and part of it was subsequently acquired for the railway station.

Sirājganj is, next to Nārāyanganj, the most important jute market in Bengal outside Calcutta, jute being brought to it from the west of Mymensingh and from Pābna, Bogra, Cooch-Behar, Rangpur and Goālpāra and pressed into bales, which are either railed or shipped by river steamer to Calcutta. It also collects the agricultural produce of Pābna and the neighbouring districts for export to Calcutta and distributes the imports of salt, piece-goods, etc. It contains agencies of Ralli Brothers, David & Co. and others, as well as a branch (pay office) of the Imperial Bank of India, and it is an important river steamer station. A branch of the Australian Baptist Mission (Tasmanian field) is established there. There are two high schools, a senior Madrasa and a charitable dispensary in the town.

The area within municipal limits extends over 11½ square miles, and the population, which was 24,777 in 1911, is 25 518

according to the census of 1921. The town obtains its water-supply from a large number of wells, both municipal and private, the rivers Kāta Khāl and Dhānbāndi and a few small tanks; there are about 150 municipal wells, all *pucka*, and the people generally use well water for drinking purposes. The roads within the town have a total length of 25 miles, of which only 3 miles are metalled. There are two markets, one of which is municipal and the other (called the Ganj Bazar) belongs to several zamīndārs. There are two trenching-grounds with an area of 12 *bighas*. A municipal burning-*ghāt* has been established on the river Dhānbāndi, and there are one municipal and two private burial-grounds. The natural drainage is towards the river Dhānbāndi and most of the drains discharge into it or into the ditches, excavations and *jhils* with which the town abounds.

The following description of Sirājganj published in 1876 gives an interesting account of its early history and of its appearance at that time :—" Sir George Campbell once referred to Sirājganj as ' a town without houses, ' and such is the appearance which it presents to the eye of the voyager on the Brahmaputra river. From the deck of his steamer the passenger can at once perceive that he has reached a place where trade is active. Small boats collected together in little fleets are approaching the mart from the north ; larger vessels are departing from the other entrance of the natural harbour, and making for Calcutta. On the shore, crowds of coolies are busy in landing open hanks of jute, packing them into drums and reshipping the fibre in this form on board the flats and the other craft bound for the south. If it is the hour of the daily bazar, the brokers and local merchants are collected in light boats and are busily effecting their purchases. The bright head-dresses of the Kāyas or Mārwāris, from the native state of Mārwār, are sufficiently numerous to give to the assembly a liveliness, which is not much increased by the white dress of the Bengali *mahājan*, or the riding costume and the sola (pith) hat of the European. The signs of a large and keen traffic are unmistakable.

" The strangeness of the sight consists in this, that the scene of so much commercial energy is laid amidst a waste of sands, where there is not a tree to afford shade, and barely a shed to give shelter. Some five miles from the mart, two factory chimneys may be seen rising above a line of trees ; and these indicate the position of the real town of Sirājganj. Between their homes and the bazar, all engaged in the trade have

to go and come daily over this great extent of open *char*. It will be easily understood that this is no pleasant journey in the hot season, when the glare of the sun is reflected from the sand, which is blown in clouds by the strong wind then prevailing. A great number even of the poorest classes consider it necessary to keep ponies, in order to perform it with the less fatigue. Early in June comes a relief. The river rises, flooding the sands on which the bazar had been held. It fills up and renders navigable a small channel through the town of Sirājganj itself. For the next four months, trade is carried on with every convenience close to the doors of the merchants. In October, the bazar shifts again to some new spot, the nearest natural haven formed by the floods of the previous season on the bank of the Jamuna. When we add that between the desertion of one bazar and the formation of another, there is often an interval of weeks, during which business is almost suspended, it will be clear that Sirājganj has its disadvantages as a port.

"It will be asked how it came to pass that a place so badly adapted for the purpose came to be selected as the emporium of the trade of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. The explanation is to be found in the shifting and uncertain character of these rivers. When, about sixty years ago, Sirājganj was founded by Sirāj Ali, the zamīndār whose name it still bears, it was built on the banks of the Brahmaputra. In the year 1848 the stream changed its course, and swamped the whole town. The traders retired before its encroachments, and established themselves on its new bank; but hardly had they done so when it again retreated, leaving their houses three miles from its stream. The site of the old town was thus left high and dry again, but not a trace of it can be discovered on the desolate *char* which now fills its place. The river has washed away not only the houses and roads, but also the soil on which they rested, to the depth of several feet.

"Warned by such losses the traders now prefer to live at a distance from the capricious stream, which, while it brings wealth to their doors, may at any moment destroy the fruit of their labours. They could find a much better site for a bazar ten miles down-stream, at a place called Belkuchi, but they do not wish for any more changes. Belkuchi might any day be washed away, or the stream might desert it; indeed, it appears that the merchants have made up their minds to stand by Sirājganj in spite of all inducements to move, as they are one by one building comfortable brick-houses in the place of the mat and bamboo dwellings in which they for years resided."

**Sitlai.**—A village in the Chātmohar thāna, situated a few miles south-east of Hāndiāl. It is the seat of one of the principal zamīndār families of the district and contains a charitable dispensary.

**Tantiband.**—A village 12 miles east of Pābna in the north-east of the Sujānagar thāna of the Sadar subdivision, which is the headquarters of a leading zamīndār family known as the Chaudhuri zamindars of Tāntiband. The founder of the family was Rādha Ballabh Chaudhuri, who served under the Moghul Emperors and was rewarded with considerable tracts of *lākhirāj* and some zamīndāris. The real architect of its fortunes was Upendra Narayan Chaudhuri, who held office under Government in the early days of British administration and succeeded in amassing a considerable fortune and acquiring large estates. From him have descended four different branches of the family. One of the family, Bijay Gobind Chaudhuri, as stated in Chapter II, undertook the defence of the route from Dacca to Pābna during the Mutiny and received from the Lieutenant-Governor "warm acknowledgments for his loyalty." The family has shown considerable munificence and public spirit. The road from Tāntiband to Pābna and the Sujānagar Bazar road were constructed by them. The cholera ward of the Pābna hospital was the gift of Abhay Gobind Chaudhuri. A library at Pābna was constructed by Annada Govind Chaudhuri and named after him: it was subsequently enlarged by his sons, Jnanada Gobind and others. The present members of the family maintain a charitable dispensary at Tāntiband. Srī Gobind Chaudhuri obtained a *patni* lease of the town of Pābna some years ago from Mahārāja Rao Jogendra Nārāyan Ray of Lālgola in Murshidābād. The family is Barendra Brahman by caste and most of them live at Pābna. The four branches are represented by Jnanada Gobind Chaudhuri and his brothers, who have a 5 annas share, Kshirod Gobind Chaudhuri and his brothers, who have a 4 annas share, Srī Gobind Chaudhuri and his sons, who have a 3 annas share, and Sudhangshu Gobind Chaudhuri, who has a 4 annas share.

**Taras.**—A village in the west of the Sirājganj subdivision, which contains a police-station, a high school and a dispensary. It is the headquarters of the family of the late Rai Banamāli Ray Bahādur, which owns the largest zamīndāri in the district. The family traces its descent to Basudeb Tālukdār, who lived in the 17th century. The name of his grandson Balarām Dās is, as mentioned later, commemorated

by an inscription of 1711 A.D. Balarām Dās was employed by the Nātor Rāj and adopted the title of Ray. On the death, in the early part of the 19th century, of Rām Sundar Ray, fifth in descent from Balarām Dās or Ray, the direct line terminated, and Rām Sundar's four successors were all adopted sons. The last of these was Rai Banamāli Ray Bahādur, who died in 1914, leaving two sons Kshitish Bhusan Ray and Rādhika Bhusan Ray. The title of Rai Bahādur was conferred upon Banamāli Ray in 1894 in recognition of his munificence and public spirit. He founded the Elliott-Banamāli Technical School at Pābna, the Banwārilāl High School at Sirājganj and the high school and dispensary at Tārās. He also contributed Rs. 50,000 to the Edward College at Pābna for the new college buildings. His eldest son Khistish Bhusan Ray, who was born in 1883, has also received the title of Rai Bahādur in recognition of his generosity and public spirit. The family has a large property in Pābna and also in the districts of Rājshāhi and Bogra with a rental of over Rs. 3 lakhs. Its members are Barendra Kayasths by caste and Vaishnavas by religion. Their headquarters at Tārās is known as Banwārinagar.

The village of Tārās contains many temples, one of which, a Siva temple, has two old inscriptions. One dates back to 1635 and is as follows :—

"শাকে বাজি শরা শুগেন্দু
গণিতে শ্রীরাম দেবাৎ পরঃ।
শ্রীনারায়ণ দেব এব স্বকৃতিঃ।
স্বর্লোকে লোকোত্তর।
প্রাসাদং শ্রুতি দৃষ্টতো।
নিরুপমং ভক্ত্যা দদৌ শম্ভবে।
মাতুঃ স্বর্গ সুখ প্রয়াণ করণে
সোপান মেকং ভুবি॥"

This may be translated :—

"The prosperous Nārāyana Deva, of meritorious deeds, after the prosperous Rām Deva, dedicated, with devotion to Sambhu, a temple, extraordinary even in heaven and incomparable either according to the Sāstras or to experience, as a staircase resting on earth for a comfortable journey of his mother to heaven in the

year counted by the moon, the arrow, and the horse of the Saka, era (*i.e.*, 1557 Sakabda or 1635 A. D.).

The other inscription is :—

কালাগ্নি তর্কেন্দু মিতে শকাব্দে ।
বরং শিবস্থালয় মিষ্টকাষ্ঠৈঃ ॥
শীর্ণং স্ফুটক্ষোদ্ধর ভেশ্ম ভক্ত্যা ।
তস্মিন্ প্রবীণো বলরাম দাসঃ ॥

The English version of this inscription is "Balarām Dās, expert in his devotion to Siva, restores with bricks, etc., a superior temple of Siva, which was dilapidated and leaky, in the Saka year measured by the moon, systems of philosophy, fires and time (*i.e.*, 1663 Sakabda or 1711 A. D.)."

**Ullapara.**—Village in the Sirājganj subdivision, situated 2 miles from the railway and lying on the main route from Sirājganj to Shāhzādpur, about 8 miles from the latter. It is the headquarters of a thāna and contains a sub-registry office, a high school and a dispensary. As stated in Chapter X, it was suggested at one time that it should be made a subdivisional headquarters, but the land in the neighbourhood is low-lying and intersected by *khāls*, and the cost of raising sites and making the place suitable for the headquarters of a subdivision would have been prohibitive.

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